

## Church Unity/Building (3)

# The Source of True Christian Unity

*Ephesians 4:4-6*

**\*\*READ THE TEXT\*\***

### INTRO-

#### *Introductory Illustration*

- In a recent Article In the ***National Catholic Reporter*** (from October 31, 2017, Thomas Reese, a Jesuit Franciscan priest who studied at SLU, UC Berkley) argued that the Ecumenism movement is very important! **Ecumenism** is not just about theological dialogue over matters of doctrine. There is also the ecumenism of friendship, prayer and social action.
  - Pope Francis said --> “My wish is that the dialogue between us should help to build bridges connecting all people ... in such a way that everyone can see in the other not an enemy, not a rival, but a brother or sister to be welcomed and embraced!”
  - He advocated Next Steps toward ecumenical unity:
    - 1. Ecumenical marriages (bringing families together from different religions)
    - 2. Unity should surpass all our disagreements about smaller issues
    - 3. The Catholic church must view itself as the inclusive entity and welcome all others. The goal of the RCC (Roman Catholic Church) must always be to be more inclusive, more "catholic" in the sense of universal.
  - Pope Francis proclaimed -- “It is clear that the faith is not intransigent [=unwilling to change], but grows in coexistence that respects the other”. The Catholic priest concluded his article --> My hope is that ecumenism continues to progress so that, in the future, we will truly know and experience our oneness in Christ.
    - ❖ JC RYLE: Unity without the gospel is a worthless unity; it is the very unity of hell.
- **Why is ALL this important?** Listen carefully:
- **A historic interfaith covenant** was signed in the Middle East in 2019. Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb is considered to be the most important imam in Sunni Islam, joined hands with Pope Francis at a signing ceremony in Abu Dhabi.

- According to the official Vatican website, a tremendous amount of preparation went into the drafting of this document, and it encourages believers from all religions “to shake hands, embrace one another, kiss one another and even pray” with one another. According to the document produced by Pope Francis, all religions must be considered equal, **and Islam is as acceptable to God as Christianity.**
- The modern ecumenical movement throws open a “wide” gate beckoning everyone to come in with a great emphasis on uniting professing Christians of all denominations and beliefs. The message is that we’re not so different after all... we can work together. Setting aside theological differences, we can help each other in the things we all agree upon.
- That effort is commonly referred to as “ecumenism,” which is defined as “the organized attempt to bring about the cooperation and unity of all believers in Christ.”
- **We are to join w/ Catholics, Muslims & all religions? Is this how we get unity? But we cannot...**
  - The Koran affirms that the Trinity is 3 gods.
  - Surah 5.116 asserts that Mary is part of the Trinity
  - The Koran states that Mary is the Sister of Aaron
  - The Koran teaches that Jesus did not die on a cross (or rise!)
  - **AND >> the** Catechism of Roman Catholic Church *paragraph 841* teaches [on ‘The Church’s relationship with the Muslims] --> “The plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place amongst whom are the Muslims; these profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful God...
    - JC RYLE has a word: Never let us be guilty of sacrificing any portion of truth on the altar of peace.
- Do we want unity? **Of course.** But we want the *True Unity* the way God *defines* it. But we must remember that *God creates unity* and we are to *maintain* it. But we cannot walk to the Temple of “Coexist” and worship with anyone and everyone as we throw our Truth away & our doctrine away & our gospel away!
- **What is Unity?** UNITY is the Spirit-given like-mindedness, commitments & affections that believers have centered on Christ, His Word and His Gospel.
  - Richard Mayhue says: “TRUE UNITY is grounded in a shared commitment to the Lordship of Christ and the Truth of His Gospel. He is exclusive & the only way to God. The Bible does NOT teach unity at any cost.  
*The Bible does teach a unity ONLY IN CHRIST.*

Today our text is extremely helpful & profoundly relevant: what’s the *source* of true unity? What’s the *ground*, the *basis*, the *SOURCE* of true unity? **Eph 4 will tell us clearly.**

### Background to Eph 4

- Context/background of Eph 4:1-6
  - 1. the **summons** (v.1) —> the *beseeking*
    - (what am I to do?) > the *need* for unity
  - 2. the **specifics** (v.2-3) —> the *behavior*
    - (how am I to do it?) > the *virtues* of unity
  - 3. the **source** (v.4-6) —> the *basis*
    - (Where does this come from?) >> the *basis* of unity
    - Vv.4-6 the repeated word/emphasis: “one” (7x)
- *Suppose there was a King over a nation. He ruled the land & exercised great power over his citizens. There was a very important international meeting of world leaders in another country. The King decided to send his SON, as the king’s delegate, the king’s messenger, the king’s ambassador, the king’s representative. Then, just before the SON boarded the plane to go, the King said to him, SON >> remember: here’s why you’re going, here’s WHO you are, here’s the FAMILY YOU’RE FROM, here’s the REASON you’re going.*
- *what comfort those words would be. A reminder of his position, placement & identity.*
  - *it was the BASIS for his travels*
  - *it was the GROUND and the REASON for his going abroad.*
- *This is precisely what’s going on today. It is the King telling YOU “Remember, here’s the \*ground, the basis, the reason\* for what you do. >>> it’s encouraging, it’s comforting, it’s strengthening; it’s important.*

**THESIS — This text will give us 7 fixed foundation stones that serve as the SOURCE / basis FOR Christian UNITY.**

### **I. ONE BODY (4a)**

- A. It’s a metaphor of *many individual parts all joined to & working together as a unified whole*. We are a Body -- the body of Christ. Every Christian is a member of His body. True unity is *always* bound together within the *True Elect of God* (true believers/Christians).
- B. Here this refers to the Church, the invisible Body of believers, the family of God. Christ is our Head, every Christian is a member of *His Body*. (Eph 1.22; 2.14; 3.6; 4:15-16; 5.30).
1. Rom 12.5 - we who are many are one body in Christ.
  2. 1 Cor 12.27 - now you are Christ’s body and individually members of it
  3. Col 1.18 - Christ is the Head of the body, the church
- C. ONE BODY >> many members (in the Church).
1. **You??** Are you a member? are you playing your *\*part\** in this ONE body?
  2. are you joined to, connected to, working in harmony with others in the BODY?

### **II. ONE SPIRIT (4b)**

- A. True unity is possible *By the Spirit*.
- B. This refers to God the Holy Spirit (3<sup>rd</sup> member of the Trinity). There is One Spirit who saves believers, enlightens them, awakens them, regenerates them, lives in them, convicts them! ***He lives in us -- we are His Temple!***
- C. 1 Cor 12:13; 1 Cor 6:19; 1 Cor 3:16 - We have the SPIRIT!

1. Every single Christian in this Body of Christ (=the Church) is *unified together* b/c of God the Spirit who *lives in, dwells in, secures and who comforts us!*
2. Paul speaks of Him as the Spirit of God who seals us for the day of redemption (Eph 4.30); this Spirit gives us access to the Father (Eph 2.18); And He seals us & is our pledge/guarantee/down payment of our future redemption (Eph 1.13-14). **Amen!**
3. Has this SPIRIT OF GOD saved you? Enlightened you? Regenerated you? Awakened you? Indwell you? If so, *you are unified with believers!*

### **III. ONE HOPE (4c)**

- A. Paul said nonbelievers have *\*no hope\** (Eph 2.12). But for believers, if Christ is in us, then this is the “hope of glory” (Col 1.27).
- B. The hope of our calling -- the hope of the future, the eternal glory, the certainty of our eternal destiny. We are unified b/c we have a common ***Hope -- a sure, steady HOPE!***
  1. Every believer has the same *hope* of heaven!
  2. David said: my hope is from God (Ps 62.5); Ps 119.166 - I hope for your salvation, O Lord.
  3. We exult in the HOPE of the glory of God (Rom 5.2); we hope for what we do not see but with perseverance we eagerly wait for it (Rom 8.25).
  4. Titus 1.2 - the HOPE of eternal life. & we have our hope fixed upon Christ & thus we purify ourselves as He is pure (1 John 3.2-3).
  5. We can talk about heaven & rejoice together! This is our Hope!

### **IV. ONE LORD (5a)**

- A. Just as metals are strongly attracted to a magnet, ***so are all believers drawn to & in submission to ONE Lord.***
- B. The word “LORD” refers to the sovereign one, who has all power, authority; absolute ownership; he owns everything as his own possession.
- C. This is a reference to **Jesus Christ being the LORD!** Lord refers to the Sovereign One, the Master, the King, the Authority. (Eph 1.2, 3, 15, 17; 6:23-24- Jesus is LORD!)
  1. WE confess & proclaim that Jesus Is LORD (2 Cor 4.5). We are unified as we all *Follow our Same Head, the Same King, the Same Lord, the Same authority!*
  2. As Augustine said: Jesus Christ will be **Lord** of all or He will not be **Lord** at all. (Augustine)
- D. Peter was preaching salvation through Jesus Christ (He is LORD OF ALL) (Acts 10:35)
- E. IS JESUS \*YOUR\* LORD?
  1. You must CONFESS Him as LORD and believe rightly in HIM.
  2. Do you submit to Him and obey him? Do you desire him & follow Him? Does your LORD consume your heart and your mind and thoughts?

### **V. ONE FAITH (5b)**

- A. Just as employees may need to sign on a particular *code of conduct* in the workplace, so it is that believers need to *adhere* to the ***body of Christian Truth*** -- the ‘faith’ -- given to us.

B. Here the “faith” refers to that **body of doctrine which we believe**. It’s the doctrines of salvation; the truth that saves. [Scriptures. God. Christ. Atonement. Repentance]

1. 1 Tim 4.1 - the Spirit says that many will fall away from the “**faith**” (body of truth)

2. Jude 3 - contend earnestly for the “**faith**”

3. 2 Cor 13.5 - test yourselves and see if you are **IN THE FAITH**

4. This is the *\*content\** of saving truth. **We are unified as we affirm this!**

5. Lloyd Jones: "that it refers to the very essence of the Gospel

6. MacArthur: body of doctrine revealed in the New Testament.

7. Wiersbe: There is one settled body of truth deposited by Christ in His church, and this is “the faith.”

C. **ONE FAITH** > if you’re a believer, you subscribe to this Faith.

1. It’s this body of Doctrine that all true believers **MUST** adhere to.

2. read the **NICENE** creed > composed in the early 4<sup>th</sup> c. Of the church >> do you affirm this? This is our *common faith*; we affirm this as True.

## VI. ONE BAPTISM (5c)

A. Baptism is a term that refers to the *full placing into, full immersing into another*.

B. This refers to the unity we have in “baptism”.

C. 2 views: 1. is this water baptism (moment of identification // ordinance) /// 2. is this spiritual baptism (moment of conversion // salvation)

1. In light of Col 2:12 and Rom 6:4-5, we view this **baptism** as a metaphor of the believer's identification with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. [fully brought *into/immersed* into Christ by union with Him.]

a) We all have a common salvation experience of being fully/spiritually immersed/joined **INTO** Christ. We are united to Him fully. His death is our death. His burial is our burial. His resurrection is **OUR** resurrection to new life.

✓ \_\_\_\_\_ The baptism here is not something **YOU DO** but something **GOD DOES TO YOU**

✓ \_\_\_\_\_ The baptism here is not with literal water in a tank/pool; it’s the idea of being spiritually baptized/immersed/dunked **FULLY INTO CHRIST**

b) Gal 3.27 - all of you who have been baptized (immersed/saved) into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

## VII. ONE GOD & FATHER (6)

A. God has a family which is entered into by faith in Christ. The children of the same family having the same father and are devoted to Him will be united among themselves.

B. God is Father to all His predestined ones (Eph 1.5; 2.18; 3.14; 6.23).

1. V.6 - the word repeated is “all” (4x) - each time referring to **all** believers in Jesus Christ -- *not* all mankind!

2. The implication is that God is over all His people. He is the **GOD over those unified in his family**. He is the Father over those He adopted & saved!

3. 1 Cor 8.6 says this.

❖ He is **OVER ALL** — Preeminent/ Sovereign Purpose

❖ He is **THRU ALL** — Pervasive Power

❖ He is **IN YOU ALL** — Permanent/ Indwelling Presence

- O what unity we enjoy as believers! Just as all planets orbit around the sun, so it is that all believers live in unity around Christ & His True Gospel.
- We cannot unify & we *will not* unify with those who deny the Truth.
- We don't hate or shun them; but we must love them by evangelizing them & calling them to repentance & faith in Jesus Christ alone!
  - **Friends:** is *any* of you this morning chafing at this? You ridicule these words? You have drunk the cool-aid of *inclusivism* and *tolerance* and *relativism*? Oh, come & be united to God in Christ! Come rest your weary soul in Him! Enter thru the narrow gate! **Be saved!**

### **So what can you do???**

1. **Be thankful** (that God has accomplished this for you!) —> take this 7point outline & thank God one by one this week.
2. **Be prayerful** (that you would maintain/preserve unity) —> take your membership role & pray for each person *by name*
3. **Be humble** (consider others more important than self; Phil 2) —>
4. **Be intentional** (love one another; encourage one another; edify one another)
5. **Be faithful** (attend the corporate gatherings -- Sun, Wed; this is your family)

AW Tozer illustrates it so beautifully: Has it ever occurred to you that one hundred pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other? They are of one accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard to which each one must individually bow. So one hundred worshipers [meeting] together, each one looking to Christ, are in heart nearer to each other than they could possibly be, were they to become 'unity' conscious and turn their eyes away from God to strive for closer fellowship. ***Let us all be tuned to Christ by looking to Him in faith!*** Behold the source of unity!

### **CONCL-**

#### *Concluding Illustration*

- The *Heidelberg Catechism* was written in 1563, it was a Reformed and warm-hearted catechism for families & churches in Germany
  - **Q22 - what must a Christian believe?**
  - **A** - all that is promised in the gospel, which the articles of our Christian faith teach us in a summary.
  - **Q23 - what are these articles?** [*in Apostles' creed*]
    - *I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.*
    - *I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the grave The third day he rose again from the dead.*

*He ascended to heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.  
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.*

- *I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic (=worldwide) church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.*