

CALL to PRAYER - Pray that we would earnestly contend for the faith - Jude 3

## **Ephesians 4:3-6 - THE UNITY THAT IS**

Intro - Psalm 133:1 says, "How good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!" Unity is a wonderful thing and disunity is a terrible thing. Jesus said, "a house divided cannot stand" and He prayed that His house (people) would be one. Because unity is so precious, great efforts are often engaged to generate unity within the church. Divisive issues are spotted and sometimes downplayed or ignored so the greater goal of "unity" can be achieved. Our text addresses the subject of unity, but it doesn't call us to work hard to try and achieve unity, rather it calls us to preserve a unity that already exists. There is a unity that is inherited within Christianity. We are not to strive to acquire an elusive unity; we are to work to keep an already established unity. (This is not a difference without a distinction.) If *Christian unity* is something to achieve then compromise on convictions is pushed so that the elusive goal of "unity" can be grasped by removing the perceived obstacles ("let's be inclusive... not divisive... and just go along to get along"). But if *Christian unity* is something that exists then protections are put in place to preserve that which is already in one's possession. *Christian Unity* is the heritage & inheritance of Christ's church. The is *a unity that is*.

### **THE CALL TO PRESERVE UNITY**

- Ephesians 4 begins with a call for believers to walk worthy of our calling and to engage in Christian living. Christians are to believe right and behave right. Two sides of the Christian coin
  - The last virtue mentioned is "keeping / preserving the unity of the Spirit..." 4:3
  - We are not to create unity...we are to keep unity. Gr. - keep = a warden, guard, keep eye on
    - *Christian unity* is not a destination to pursue... it is a possession to keep.
    - We are not to strive to get it, we are to strive to keep it.
- "being diligent to preserve" <sup>(NASB)</sup> "make every effort to keep" <sup>(NIV)</sup> "endeavoring to keep" <sup>(NKJV)</sup>
  - Preserves are sealed up to protect (room temp on shelf but must refrigerate after opening)
  - The outside environment/influence is what disrupts the unity and causes decay.
- The UMC is not united anymore.
  - What was introduced from the outside is what corrupted their unity inside.
  - Those who try and change tradition are the ones bringing disunity - 2 Thess. 2:15
  - When we cease trying to organize a *unity* and just recognize *the unity that is...* it will help us preserve it as well as spot those who are trying to destroy it.
- Ecumenical unity is not Biblical unity (COEXIST sticker)
  - Amos 3:3 <sup>(NKJV)</sup> Jude 3 1 Cor. 11:18-19

### **THE SEVEN-FOLD UNITY OF CHRISTIANITY**

1. One BODY 4:4a
  - a. There is only one church body 1 Cor. 12:13
  - b. Jesus has but one bride. Not a Jewish bride & Gentile bride...not a Baptist & Presbyterian...
  - c. The church of Jesus Christ is not divided...it is united
    - i. The church is one body under one Head.

2. One SPIRIT 4:4b
  - a. Our bodies are indwelt by our spirits which enliven our whole body
  - b. The Spirit of God indwells His church... Temple in which He resides – 1 Cor. 3:16
  - c. One Spirit brings life to the whole body... the one body inhabited by the one Spirit
3. One HOPE 4:4c
  - a. There is a common hope that connects all Christians
    - i. 1 Tim. 1:1 Titus 2:13 Rom. 8:23-24
  - b. The Christians hope is not: earthly wealth.... earthly health, ..... or escaping the trial & tribulations here... 1 Cor. 15:19
    - i. Our hope is to be done with sin in our bodies, done with sin in our souls, and to be made like unto the Son (“...be saved to sin no more...”) 1 John 3:2-3
  - c. Those who emphasize a different hope are distracting us away from our unity
4. One LORD 4:5a
  - a. Our most basic confession is that Jesus is Lord - Rom. 10:9
  - b. Luke 6:46 John 8:31
  - c. Christians are unified in their submission to our Lord and His word
    - i. 2 John 9
5. One FAITH 4:5b
  - a. Jude 3 2 Thess. 2:15
  - b. Didache (the oldest church manual we have – from the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century yet very up to date...nothing new)
    - i. *There are two ways – one of life and one of death – great difference between the two ways*
    - ii. *the way of death is the way of those who persecute the good, hate the truth and love lies*
    - iii. *...Do not murder a child by abortion or kill a child at birth...*
    - iv. *Not everyone who speaks in the Spirit is a prophet...if he asks for money, he is a false prophet...if he teaches the truth but does not do what he teaches he is false prophet*
    - v. Using discernment in giving benevolence, godly living, baptism, Lord’s supper, last days, deception, sheep turning into wolves, anti-christ, 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Christ
  - c. Our most holy faith is firm and established...(Deut. 4:2)
    - i. All Christians should be united in the fight to preserve our one faith
    - ii. We don’t jettison our convictions to get “union”. Our union is in our shared Christian conviction.
6. One BAPTISM
  - a. As Baptist we are pretty particular about baptism...but there is only one baptism
    - i. We baptize with water, but Jesus baptizes with His Spirit – Mark 1:8
  - b. Must be born of water & Spirit (John 3:5) and baptized with water & Spirit
    - i. All Christians undergo the one baptism...real baptism - 1 Cor. 12:13
7. One GOD and FATHER
  - a. The most basic confession of Israel is God’s oneness - Deut. 6:4
    - i. There is a manifold unity in God - The Trinity – Three in one
  - b. There is a manifold unity in God’s church
    - i. *One Body, One Spirit, One Hope, One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism and One God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.*
    - ii. This seven-fold unity is what binds Christianity together
  - c. There is a Unity that Is - We are not to strive to get it, we are to strive to keep it
    - i. Jude 3