

One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism (Part 2)

Ephesians 4:4-6

By John Owen Butler

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Bible Text: Ephesians 4:4-6
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Heritage Presbyterian Church
14500 N Western Avenue
Edmond, OK 73013

Website: www.heritagepca.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/heritagepca

Please remain standing for the reading of God's word, and before we hear from Psalm 110, our Old Testament reading, let's pray together.

We praise you, O God, that you have been gracious to bring us together to hear your word. Here we are, O Lord, and we pray that you would give us ears to hear, give us minds to understand and to know but, Lord, we cannot with the fact of our minds and the fact of just hearing of this word know these things, you must come by your Holy Spirit and attend it and to come and work these things into our hearts. So our prayer is, Lord, that you might send him that he would come and show us our Lord Jesus. It's in his name we ask it and God's people said, amen.

Psalm 110.

1 The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." 2 The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies! 3 Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments; from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours. 4 The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." 5 The Lord is at your right hand; he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath. 6 He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses; he will shatter chiefs over the wide earth. 7 He will drink from the brook by the way; therefore he will lift up his head.

And then our New Testament reading this morning, the reading again is from Ephesians 4. Ephesians 4, we again start at verse 4,

4 There is one body and one Spirit--just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call-- 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

The grass withers, the flower fades but the word of our God stands forever. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Please be seated.

Well, good morning, congregation. It's good to see you again this Lord's day and as we are working our way through the book of Ephesians, we have been in verses 4 through 6 last Lord's day and this Lord's day and, God willing, next Lord's day as we look at this marvelous seven-fold description of the unity that we have as the people of God in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. You remember, God has been working here on earth this marvelous new thing as the apostle has discussed it already here in Ephesians 1-3, of taking for himself a people whom he has marked out, whom he has designated from before the foundation of the world from every nation and tribe and tongue and people; that he has shaped and molded a people for himself from among the Jews and among the nations and brought them together into his church; that he has a new people, as it were, he has this new creation here and it is through the means of the church, it is through his creation of the church, through his inhabiting of the church by his Holy Spirit indwelling us, it is through the almighty, awesome, resurrection power that is at work in us who believe that God's glory is most manifest, it is most evident as we are reminded by the apostle, it is through the church that God is most seeking to bring honor and glory to his name. And to reinforce this here of this unity that we have that he has already exhorted us in verses 1 through 3, "I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called," that is, our lives would be lived in such a way that they have accord with this great reality that God has already worked out and is working out in us, that basically we're not going to make God a liar, we're going to be showing, manifesting in ourselves this great calling and that we realize this marvelous purpose for which we have been created and we have been saved, but we are to do this with all humility and gentleness and patience, bearing with one another in love, and to be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. So he gives these seven reasons now in verses 4 through 6 with regards to this unity of why we are to be eager to maintain this unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and we have asked before: how eager are we towards this? How eager are we in embracing this and making this to be a reality? We may be eager to tell tales about one another, we may be eager to point out the faults of others, but where are we with regards to eagerness to seeking to maintain the unity around Christ? How eager are we to rush in and to work towards the maintenance of this unity of the Spirit and this covenant, this bond of peace?

We saw last week that we have one body and one Spirit and we have one hope that belongs to our call. There is one body, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is one Holy Spirit, he is at work in us who believe. There's not one for the Jews and one for the Gentiles, there is a single unitary work of God the Holy Spirit. And there's one hope of heaven that we're looking to the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ. Also, as we will now see, God willing, in verse 5, there is one Lord, one faith and one baptism. Paul has been working his way through and covering these things in a Trinitarian fashion. We've seen the work of God the Holy Spirit, now we see the work of God the Son, and next week the work of God the Father.

There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism. There is one Lord, and remember we've used that term again and again, there's one and only one. The exclusivity of Christ's Lordship, he alone is Lord and it is inclusive, not only is it exclusive, he is the only Lord, the one and only one, but it is inclusive with regards to being Lord. In fact, this word "Lord" in the Greek is kurios, it is one who rules. He is one who is in charge by virtue of possession, and so the idea of rulership and possession go together with this term. It's a term used later on of masters in relation to their bondslaves, as we see here in Ephesians. It is, you remember, used of Sarah in calling Abraham her Lord in 1 Peter, but most especially we see it in the Greek Old Testament or the Greek version of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint, it is the word that is used to translate the covenant name of God, Yahweh. God owns us, this covenant God owns us and he is Lord and Master over us and so when we see this term in the particular context speaking of Christ, it is to remind us again that Jesus Christ indeed is Lord, that he is Yahweh, and that glorious day will come when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess to the glory of God, that Jesus Christ is indeed Lord.

So in the church, there is one and only one Ruler. They're not a multiplicity of rulers, there is only one Ruler, the Lord Jesus Christ. There is not a separate ruler over the Jews and another one for the Gentiles. There's not one for those of a particular region and those for another region. Christ rules over all of the created order but especially in his church.

There is one faith. This is that one and only one, this inclusive, exclusive Christian faith. It includes all of the body of Christ. It is exclusive in that it is this faith and this faith alone. Now the question is asked here: is he referring to something that is subjective or objective? Is it the subjective in the sense that the faith that we as believers have, this trust of Christ that we're to have and indeed all who are in the body of Christ have a living and active faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, or is it objective, is it that body of doctrine, that body of teaching with regards to who God is and who we are and our sin and of the necessity of Christ and all that is summed up in him? And I believe it is, yes, commentators will come down on either side of the question and others will go, "It's both," I tend to think more of the common set of biblical doctrine. They are not multiple ways of salvation. There is one and only one Lord Jesus Christ, one and only one justification by faith alone in the finished work of Christ alone. We are saved the same way. There is no competing doctrines, well, yes there are competing doctrines but none of them are valid. There is one and only one faith. There is one and only one way. Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life; no one comes unto the Father but by him and it's necessary that all hold this faith in the one and only one Lord Jesus Christ.

We have this faith once for all delivered to the saints. We have this body of doctrine here that is given to us in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, so therefore if you do not actively believe what God has said about the Lord Jesus Christ, if you do not have true faith in what God has said concerning the Lord Jesus Christ and concerning your need, the necessity of your being born again by the Spirit of God, you are none of his, you are not in Christ Jesus. It is a right doctrine and a right belief, it is together one faith as we look to him.

Then there is one baptism. The question is: is he referring to baptism, that rite by which we are included in the ranks of the visible church, or is he talking about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the one activity of the Holy Spirit that has brought us into unity with one another and with our Lord? I tend to believe he is speaking of the activity of God the Holy Spirit but the fact that as we are baptized, we are having a demonstration, a sign to us of the working of God the Holy Spirit that we by faith believe would occur as we trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. So baptism in no way, shape or form is essential unto salvation, you know, there's the fact that a man cannot be saved unless he's baptized, no, we don't believe that that's what the Scripture is teaching here. You've got the dying thief on the cross, you have other cases as well. Martyn Lloyd-Jones says surely no one doubts his salvation, that thief on the cross, his conversion, his regeneration, yet he was not baptized. There have been others who have come to see the truth on their deathbeds that have never been baptized. Baptism is not essential to salvation, that is the actual having gone through that particular rite to have the application of water in the name of the Father and Son and the Holy Spirit. No, there is, however, in every believer that outpouring of God the Holy Spirit. There is on every believer that washing away of sin. There is in every believer that engrafting into Christ that is represented to us in the act of baptism itself. So there is one and only one baptism. There are not multiple baptisms in the sense that the Jews will have one and the Gentiles will have another, the Greeks will have another and the Romans will have another. No, there is one and only one that as we have this baptism of God the Holy Spirit, we are included in Christ Jesus.

Now by way of doctrine this morning as we crack open this text and look at what it has to say with regards to what we are to believe, first and foremost, biblical unity is built on the truth that there is one Lord. There is one and only one Lord. Jesus Christ is Lord and his name refers to, as we've seen, his mastery over us, his possession of us, that he indeed is God. If we are truly united biblically to him, our unity must begin and find its summation in the person and work of this Lord Jesus Christ; that everything revolves around him. There are not lords, but one Lord. So therefore, if someone or some group denies the testimony of the Bible as to who Jesus is and what he has done, that he's fully God and fully man, we are not and cannot be in unity with them. It can't exist.

So there has to be one Lord but practically speaking for us in the church, there is one and only one Lord. I am not a lord of the church. Elders, other elders are not lords over the church. We are mere governors over the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. We administer the law that has already been given to us. There is only one King and Lawgiver in Zion, the Scripture says, and that is, who? The Lord Jesus Christ. So therefore we may not shape any new doctrines, we may not impose on God's people anything beyond what he has said in his word as to what constitutes right Christian living. It has to be according to the word of the Lord Jesus Christ and so, therefore, elders both teaching and ruling, we are as administrators of this but also the fact that there is only one Lord in the church means that we as those who are in the body of Christ must submit to him; that his word is law; that his word governs; that his will is what must obtain in all that we do and all that we are.

This is where it really begins to cut across the grain with us because we all by our fallen nature and that remnant of sin that is still within us, want to be our own little lords, to be our own bosses over everything, to think that we still somehow maintain possession over ourselves, that we somehow believe that we do not need to be submitted to him. And one of the great things of sanctification is the Lord loves to disabuse us of that notion. Over and over and over again he tells us, he shows us who's boss, amen? Amen, he does. Yeah. If you've been in the Lord any amount of time, you know, you steal glory for him, he's going, "No, that's not gonna fly." He alone is Lord.

Our Lord is Lord because of who he is, the Sovereign Creator and Sustainer of the universe and by his purchasing of us with his blood on the cross. We cannot have the Lord Jesus Christ just as Savior but not as Lord. Away with that foolish doctrine that is deadly. Jesus is Lord of us, he is Lord. Now the question is when are we going to wise up to that fact? When are going to acknowledge that fact? And I think that's what part of the point in that particular line of teaching is, when are we going to understand that he is Lord over all? But to somehow say that he isn't Lord until, that somehow we have surrendered and put him on the throne of our lives I think is ludicrous. He is Lord, you know, just in the fact that if I were to drive down the turnpike and here I am, I'm doing 90 to nothing on the turnpike, pretty soon I'm going to hopefully be pulled over by LHP and they're going to say, "Why are you driving 90 miles an hour?" I go, "Well, you know, I didn't know you had any authority here. You know, I just, you know, I kind of pick my own speed limit. It seemed pretty good to me." And he says, "Sorry, here, I want to give you a ticket," a ticket because I was driving past 75 miles an hour in that part of the turnpike. I didn't acknowledge that there was an authority there. I was ignorant of that authority but that authority was there nonetheless.

Jesus Christ is Lord over all. Now, yes, our prayer is that we would understand this more and more and be acknowledged to the Lord Jesus Christ, but the fact of the matter is especially that we must remember that it is a package deal; that we must have the Lord Jesus as Savior and as Lord, as Master over us at all times. If anyone tries to tell you that you can have Jesus as Savior but not as Lord, that you don't have to be submitted to his will, to his commands as he gives in the Scriptures, you cannot have true Christian fellowship with that individual. We cannot do this because what happens is anarchy because we want to be autonomous, self-governing, self-law, as opposed to God being in charge of us, of his law, his law directing us, of his rules, his statutes, commandments and ordinances directing us.

Now we live in an age that, you know, partially because of, you know, of an American rebellious kind of attitude towards authority, you know, we all are flying that yellow Gadsden rattlesnake flag over our lives, "Don't tread on me," not in the patriotic sense but in a sense of sticking it in the eye of God and saying, "I don't want to be submissive to you. I don't want to be governed by you, I want to call the shots." But the disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ will cry out with the psalmist, "O, how love I thy law. It is my meditation all the day. I delight to do your will, O God." Even as our Lord Jesus said, "Behold, it is written in the book of the law, 'I delight to do your will, O Lord.'" As it is

with Jesus, so it is with those who are Jesus', that we belong to him and our heart's desire will want to be to do his will.

Second, biblical unity is built on the truth that there is one faith. There are not Christian faiths out there. It's interesting if you'll read some of the histories of the church that are being pushed forward today by scholars, they'll say there are Christian faiths out there. No, there has only been one holy catholic and apostolic church, there's only been one true Christian faith, and that's it. There are others that are aberrations out there, there are other ways of looking at this but they have never been incorporated, included in what is the one true Christian faith.

This is referencing the Christian faith here in the sense of looking at chapter 4 here at verse 13, that one of the things Christ does to help bring us to maturity in him, that he is at work in us through the teaching ministry of the word through the apostles, prophets, evangelists and now continuing on, there are shepherds and teachers, the pastor/teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry for the building up of the body of Christ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, and part of this work of this preaching ministry, this teaching ministry as Christ has appointed those to proclaim his word, and so he is at work in us to shape us and mold us that we have conformity and understanding with regards to who he is and what he has come to do.

Every true believer professes and holds to a core of doctrines of the faith. Now, yes, there are divergence of opinion and practice on some things but with regards to the core doctrines of who Christ is and what he has come to do and how man is saved, those are the things to which we hold, those are the things that every true believer holds that the eternal God sent his eternal Son who took on human flesh through the virgin birth; that this God-man lived a perfect life and offered himself on the cross in the place of sinners, paying the debt that we owe; that he was bodily raised from the dead, he ascended bodily into heaven and he's coming back again bodily to judge the world and to reign forever. We receive salvation by that salvation that he offers by grace alone, through faith alone, apart from any merit or works on our part. If we deny any of these core truths of the Gospel, we do not hold to the one true faith and there is no basis for us considering those who are aberrant to be those with whom we are united in the body of Christ. Our prayer is that God would change them and we would seek to engage them and to speak the truth to them in love and to remind them, "No, this is what the Scripture teaches," and pray that God would move upon their hearts, but we cannot consider that we have true basis for unity with them because the core of our unity is in Christ. He must be that one. He must be that hinge around which everything works.

And third, biblical unity is built on the truth that there is one baptism. Now as I referred to earlier that this refers to the work of God the Holy Spirit, all believers are baptized in God the Holy Spirit. As we've been told already in Ephesians 1:13 and 14, "In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory." Since Pentecost and the

outpouring of the Spirit there, God's people receive the gift of his Spirit for the service of Christ and of his church. All with that gift from God of faith in Jesus, receive the indwelling of God the Holy Spirit for service of Christ and of his body, the church. There's no such thing as a believer who lacks the Holy Spirit. There's one Spirit, one baptism of God the Holy Spirit. This is most certainly true.

Now by way of application of this, the fact that there is one and only one Lord Jesus Christ, our submission to him as the one Lord must be total. As we said, that word kurios implies Lordship, control, mastery over us, and ownership. We cannot serve two masters. Jesus said you cannot serve God and mammon. You're going to love the one or hate the other. You can't serve them both. You have to serve one. It must be Christ Jesus himself.

There is one and only one Lord. You see, this is more than just a statement of monotheism, it's a throwdown against all rebellion. It is a challenge. Nothing and no one in this universe is God except God himself and therefore he is Lord and he's a jealous God who brooks no competition, who will not allow his glory to be ascribed to another. As Lord and Sovereign, as Owner and Master, then we are not our own. We've been bought with a price of Christ's blood. He owns us. He is sovereign over us. We pay lip service to this fact but the fact of the matter is it must be more than with our lips, it must be with the totality of our lives that we belong to Christ, that I am not my own but I belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Heidelberg Catechism in the first Question on Lord's Day 1, the first question and the answer that is given there, "I am not my own. I belong to Christ. He is sovereign over me. He owns me." This applies to every part of who and what I am, in my thinking, in my attitudes, in my speech, in my behaviors, in the course of the day that I acknowledge the ownership of Christ over me and submit to him and to his word as it is lived out and how I work in the workplace, how I deal with my children, how I relate to my spouse, how I respect those who are in authority over me, and Paul will be fleshing this out here in Ephesians 5 and 6. But we must, you know, how much has this worked itself into us? How much of this has infected us and permeated our understanding of things, that he is Lord, that we don't somehow kind of carve out a little enclave that we're going to raise our own little flag over and call this ours. No, it is all, it is thorough that we belong to him.

Look at your attitudes towards your time, which really isn't yours. When someone interrupts, when someone or something happens and, you know, you've been engaged in something you really like and somebody comes along and somehow upsets your apple cart, messes up your day because you've been off doing something that you really are grooving on in doing that. Well, do you know what? That time was never yours in the fact of ownership, you were there to be a steward of it but it never belonged to you in the first place, and God is using that interruption to remind you of just who is in charge and who's time it really is. When you open up your bank statement or you look at your checkbook and you see what is there, you have to understand that every single penny that is there is a stewardship but owned by God. You are a manager of it but you are not the owner of it and it must be disposed in such a way that honors Christ, that is at his direction, that all that we have from womb to tomb, in fact the very air that we breathe, the fact of our very existence is due to the fact of our being owned by God not only in the

creaturely sense as he has created all things, but especially more so by the fact that we have been redeemed by the blood of his own precious Son.

We must submit to him in our reasoning, our thinking, to be subject to his teaching. Our conscience to his law, our hearts and lives to his control, Charles Hodge said. We must submit to him as he's offered to us in the Gospel, not just as God, not just as the Logos, not just as the philosophies of men would say, this great teacher, but as the God-man. He's presented to us as born of a virgin who lived in perfect obedience to the Father's will, who died and rose again that he would be Lord both of the dead and the living. Our submission to him must be total, must be complete. We must, as we consider the fact that we are no longer our own, the old man has died, we have been raised in Christ.

To rightly submit to this God, we must have a proper belief of him, an understanding of him. We must hold to this one true faith. We must be actively seeking to understand it, to know him. Right belief leads to right practice, to right living. Biblical doctrine rightly understood leads to biblical love. Now sometimes you'll encounter an individual where there's been kind of a disconnect in this regard; that they're all about holding to doctrines but not to the doctrine of Christ and it embraces, it has gripped them and they embrace this and they seek to live this for the glory of his name; that these are individuals who have heard these things but not do these things. And folks, it's not just the eggheads, it's every one of us. As James exhorts us to be not just hearers of the word, not to be like those of Athens who are running pillar to post to hear every new philosophy and every new teaching, and you can come and you can come to conferences and you can watch stuff online and you can have your phone filled with all kinds of mp3s of great and glorious, even squared away most Reformed teaching that you can find, but unless and until it is working itself out in your life, you've never understood Christ, you've not understood who he is and what he has come to do.

Then with regards to baptism, this one and only one baptism, the Lord Jesus has incorporated us into his church. The Holy Spirit comes and applies to us this marvelous work of Christ on our behalf. Our Larger Catechism, at Question 167 asks how is baptism to be improved by us? Well, how can you improve on baptism, you know, the work of God incorporating us into his body of his marking of us as his, being the Owner of us, how can you improve on that? No, you can't improve on that but we're gonna use improved in the sense of you remember in the land run of 1889, well, none of you remember that, okay. Remember what you were taught. You know, think through that. The land run of 1889, and one of the things, you know, the folks were riding in and they'll sometimes put down a stake there and they'll claim within a certain circumference that that's going to be their claim and they'll go in and file that claim for that particular land that they're going to homestead, and the rules as they were written I believe initially were that they had to improve that by putting a building or buildings on the property but it was not specified what the dimensions of the property had to be, or the dimensions of the buildings. And so what happened and I believe it had to occur within a five year time period, well, come 1894ish thereabouts, you began to see in some parts here in central Oklahoma where the land run was, dollhouses popping up, and they had improved the property by putting a building on the property but, you know, flying totally in the face of

the intention of that act to allow settlement there. No, to improve it, to prove it up as homesteaders used to call it, you know, there had to be that building of a house. You began with a soddie in some places, and then you would build that up into other outbuildings and you would farm that, and you would work that particular property.

Well, in baptism we need to improve it using the sense of the word in this sense. The Answer to Question 167 says, "The needful but much neglected duty of improving our baptism is to be performed by us all our life long, especially in the time of temptation and when we're present at the administration of it to others by serious and thankful consideration of the nature of it and of the ends for which Christ instituted it, the privileges and benefits conferred and sealed thereby, and of our solemn vow made therein by being humbled before our sinful defilement, our falling short of and walking contrary to the grace of baptism and our engagements, by growing up in assurance of pardon of sin, and all other blessings sealed to us in that sacrament, by drawing strength from the death and resurrection of Christ into whom we are baptized for the mortifying of sin and quickening of grace and by the endeavoring to live by faith, to have our conversation and holiness and righteousness as those that have therein given up their names to Christ and to walk in brotherly love as being baptized by the same Spirit into one body."

Brothers and sisters, this is what we are called to, that we are to walk in brotherly love as being baptized by the same Spirit, that one and only one Spirit, into that one and only one body, the body of Christ, his church. So when we are at observing baptism as God from time to time may bring those to be baptized, those who professing the faith as adults and then the children of professing believers as we believe the Scriptures rightly teach, as this occurs we are to be reminded not just to ooh and ahh over that little child or, "Oh, isn't that grand that he or she has seen the light and are coming to Jesus," but that we would reflect upon our own lives as well. As they are engaging to Christ and Christ engaging to him, that we be reminded that we belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, that we as they are being incorporated into the body of Christ by this sign here of being incorporated into the visible number of those who profess in Jesus Christ, so in the same way we would have that sense that, "Yes, I too am part of the body of Christ by the work of God in the Lord Jesus; that he by his Spirit has brought me to himself and I am in the rank and file and to live in such a way with my brothers and sisters in love, in Christ."

Think back, if you can, to your own baptism or to be reminded of the fact of your baptism, what this signifies in signs and seals to us, something appointed by Christ, something appointed by him to work this truth into us more and more. Every time from now on when you come into this place of worship and you see that baptismal font there, think of Christ. We see here at this table he says, "Do this in remembrance of me." As we gather together and as often as we do this, we do this in remembrance of him but also remember as well when you see that font, when you see that baptismal font, to be reminded again that, "I belong to Jesus and I must serve him."

Brothers and sisters, does this reality of one Lord, one faith, one baptism, permeate your thinking? Does this continually come up on your radar screen as you are living each day and relating to one another within the body of Christ, and as you're living for Jesus out in

the midst of a wicked and perverse generation? Does this affect your thinking when you are weighing and evaluating your choices and decisions that you're making, both the grand and monumental kind of things but also in the everyday mundane kind of choices of each day, that there is one and only one Lord? Am I submitted to him? Am I continually being reminded of the fact that there's one and only one faith and my heart is engaged to this Jesus? And as I grasp this faith, the way that I show that I have a grasp of this faith, an understanding of it, is that I'm living it out for him and for his glory? This is what we are called to here. This is what it means to be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Let's pray together.

Lord our God, we thank you that your word is truth and you desire that we would know truth in the inward parts, and we ask, Father, that you would come and work this deep down into us that we might understand it and not just understand with a head knowledge but understand genuinely from the heart that this is something that we are carried away with, that there is one and only one Lord, that there is one and only one faith, one and only one baptism. As we come, Lord, to your table, help us to remember this one and only one Lord Jesus, and as we profess this faith again by coming to this table, that we do so in thankful remembrance of him. We ask it in Jesus' name and God's people said, amen.