

The Unity of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:2-3)

I. Introduction

- A. Analogy to the human body
 - 1. The body of Christ – 1 Cor 12:12-14
- B. A Review of Eph 4:1-2
- C. Ephesians 4:2-3 – outline of the sermon

II. *Bearing with one another in love*

- A. The prerequisite – *patience* (Rom 2:4 1 Thess 5:14)
- B. Forbearance
 - 1. Seeing others as ‘works in progress’
 - 2. God sees the finished product (Rom 8:30)
- C. “*Love the church, warts and all*” (Brian Bjorgman)
 - 1. Not what Dietrich Bonhoeffer calls a “*wish-dream*”

God hates visionary dreaming; it makes the dreamer proud and pretentious. (Bonhoeffer)
 - 2. Neither is Biblical separation guarantee
 - 3. 2 Cor 4:7 – the key to loving others rather than a “*wish-dream*”
 - 4. 1 Cor 12:15-25 – look at someone different than you as an opportunity to love and display unity.
- D. The Rule of the church: *Unity, Diversity, Harmony*
- E. Application to the –
 - 1. universal church: do not divide on secondary matters
 - 2. local church:
 - a. seek harmony in relationships
 - b. don’t be afraid to confront sin
 - c. pray for one another
 - d. God is most glorified when sinners love one another
- F. *Sanctification is a group project*
 - 1. “Familiar Companions” Richard Baxter

III. *Endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace*

- A. It is a unity ... *of the Spirit*
 - 1. intended by God and accomplished through Christ (Ep 1:9-10)
 - 2. it is indestructible (Eph 4:4-6)
- B. *How is it then that God would ask us to maintain what He has begun?*
 - 1. The ‘*already*’ and the ‘*not yet*’
 - 2. faith in invisible realities vs. action in visible practice
- C. ***Endeavor***: *an urgent, passionate effort of your entire being*
 - 1. not attempted by human councils and treaties
 - 2. “*What God has separated, let no man join*”
- D. The sphere of Christian unity “*in the bond of peace*”
 - 1. a humble loving environment
 - 2. peace does not necessarily mean the absence of conflict
 - 3. how to deal with one another *in the bond of peace*
- E. Let us make unity more than merely a statement of good intentions