

Sermon Title: The Theology Of Unity (Part 2)
Scripture Text: Eph. 4:5-6 (Ephesians #21)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 11-7-21

There are passages of God's Word that are just so *easy* to preach; when God says, "Do this," "Don't do this," or there is a compelling story-description of something that Jesus did. And then there are the ones where, if you're going to have any goosebumps about them, you had better bring your own—like the one before us this morning. We are going to finish what is our two-part visit to Ephesians Chapter 4, Verses 4 through 6. We have titled it: "The Theology Of Unity."

It is, if you will, the doctrinal statement of "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," of which Chapter 4, Verse 1 tells us we should learn to "walk in a manner worthy of" it; and Chapter 4, Verse 3 says that we have to be "diligent to preserve" that "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (NASB-1995, and throughout, unless otherwise noted)

We're going to punctuate this a little bit differently than it probably is in your Bible because there is a Greek construction here that really doesn't have an exactly one-to-one correspondence in English, so I would rather that you read this passage this way, picking it up in the middle of Verse 3—"...being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Now, the words "there is" are not in the Greek; they're added to make it into a sentence in English, but it is *not* a sentence with a subject-verb-object, it is just a list of things. So think of it this way: "...the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, *specifically*: one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all."

This is a stylish passage. There are some wonderful elements here that make it work and fit together. The word "one" occurs seven times in those three verses—well, *that's* a theme! There are three triads here: In Verse 4, you have "one," "one," and "one"; and then in Verse 5 you again have "one," "one," and "one"; and then in Verse 6, you have a triad on the word "all"—"over all," "through all," and "in all." These are the truths that we are ordered to be "diligent to preserve" as the focal point for our unity.

An image just popped into my mind: You've seen bees swarming—they're going to build a home around that one place. Well, bees of the Lord, this is where we must swarm, *always* "being diligent to preserve" our undivided oneness around these things.

Now, if you need your goosebumps, here it comes; here is the inspired outline: One, Two, Three, Four, Five, Six, and Seven. Those are the points. One Body, One Spirit, One Hope, One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism, One God.

We started last time and we got just about halfway through with it. One Body starts in Verse 4—"There is one body..." That refers to the Church—comprised of people "from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9) who trust in Christ and Christ alone for salvation, from the first proclamation of the Gospel after the ascension of Christ to the moment of the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:16-17). The Church is a spiritual organism (Col. 1:18, 24); it is bound together by the work of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13), and so not surprisingly, the second point is: One Spirit. "...being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and *one Spirit*."

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The Holy Spirit indwells every child of God (Rom. 8:9), so our unity is appropriately attributed to the Holy Spirit and His unique work; He is the One who places us into the Body of Christ, and then He indwells us (2 Cor. 1:22).

Thirdly, we saw One Hope. Verse 4—"...one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in *one hope* of your calling." We are to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called" (vs. 1). Well, part of that "calling" is that we are called to rally around—to "swarm" around—our "one hope of our calling"; that looks forward to everything that is guaranteed by God (Heb. 9:15). It is the certainty of our eternal future. It includes the Second Coming of Christ (Rev. 1:7; 22:12); it includes His "reign" on Earth (Rev. 20:4-6); it includes all the blessings of our promised inheritance with Him, as we are "fellow heirs" with Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:17; cf. 2 Thess. 2:14) all the joys of eternity with Him forever (Ps. 16:11).

Last time, we left off looking at One Lord, starting in Verse 5—"...*one Lord*, one faith, one baptism..." This is an obvious reference to the "one Lord, Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 8:6; cf. Matt. 17:5; 28:18; Phil. 2:9-11). We *have* to be accurate in understanding *who* Jesus Christ is! It is one thing to *say* that you *believe* in Jesus; one thing to *say* that you believe in the Messiah, the Christ; one thing to *say* that you believe that Jesus *is* the Messiah—but who is He? We have to get it right (Ps. 145:18; 2 Cor. 11:4). He is the God-Man—fully human, fully divine, without diluting either of those. That's the so-called "Hypostatic Union," that He is fully God and fully Man, all the time (Col. 2:9).

We left off at looking at a few ways that that can be corrupted. The one I didn't get to last time is a rather popular and unfortunately way-too-common idea that you can have Jesus in stages: that you can have Jesus as your Savior; and then, if you make it into the Advanced Placement Club, He can be your Lord. Well, that's not true! It's a way of coddling people with saying, "Okay, it's alright to be a Christian; you can be on your way to Heaven, but you don't have to obey what the Bible says—He's just your Savior. And then the super-advanced ones make Him their Lord, and they do what He says." It just isn't true that you can have Him in pieces (Matt. 7:21; Heb. 5:9; 1 Jn. 2:3-5; Rev. 14:12; 17:14). He is *the one and only* Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:36)!

In the context of what it means to believe in Christ, Romans Chapter 10, Verse 9 says: "If you confess with your mouth *Jesus as Lord*, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." You cannot have the "you will be saved" part without the "Jesus as Lord" part! He does not come in pieces; He is "one Lord, Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 8:6; cf. 1 Cor. 1:30).

Now let's move on a little bit and press ahead. One Faith is the second part of the triad in Verse 5—"...one Lord, *one faith*, one baptism..." When you take the word "faith," you can think of it in two ways. You can think of "faith"—as it's cognate in the word "believe" as the verb—you can think of it as the principle of trusting in Christ. The only way to truly be "saved" is by "faith" (Eph. 2:8). Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone on the authority of Scripture alone for the glory of God alone. You have to have faith, and you can take that word that way.

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There are several passages in the Bible that talk about pseudo-faith—a *declaration* of faith that is short of totally trusting in Christ (e.g., Titus 1:16; Jas. 2:14). So you can think of the word "faith" that way; there is only one kind of faith that saves.

That is true, and we saw that back in Ephesians Chapter 2, Verses 8 and 9; but *here*, when it says "one faith," it refers not to the act of you putting your faith in God, or the act of you believing; "one faith" refers to the *body of doctrine* that is revealed in the Bible. "The faith"—when you put the definite article with it—is the body of truth that we believe; that is our creed, that is the teaching of the Word of God.

When the Apostle Paul got to the end of his life—that last chapter that we know for sure that he wrote before he died—in Second Timothy Chapter 4, Verse 7, he wrote: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept *the faith*." He doesn't mean, "Well, I kept on summoning up the courage to keep *believing* really hard until the end." No, he's saying, "I have not compromised *anything* about the truth of God. I have kept *the faith*," as he said to the elders in the city of Ephesus: "I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27, NKJV). "I have kept *the faith*."

This is what Jude was talking about. Remember, I told you last time: Jude had the intention to write a book like Ephesians—about salvation and what we have in Christ—but he had to change direction. In Jude Verse 3, he says: "Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for *the faith* which was once for all handed down to the saints." "The faith which was once for all handed down to the saints" is not the idea that you ought to believe; it's the accurate understanding of sound doctrine. That is what we must contend for. That is what we must be "diligent to preserve" as we rally around that truth.

We need to stand for "the faith" (Phil. 1:27; cf. 1 Cor. 16:13; Col. 1:23). We need to stand for doctrines like Revelation and Inspiration and Inerrancy—at the *core* of our faith, where we understand that the Word of God is indeed God's Word to us, that He has given to us "everything" we need for "life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3).

This, not surprisingly—like all of these things—gets attacked in many ways. The most common way to undermine the unity of the faith is ignorance, apathy. Millions of people say they believe—maybe even say that they believe in Jesus—but they never study the Bible. The most popular preachers in the world—as defined by having the most eyeballs on the TV set or ears to the radio or people in the seats—they *hate* Bible doctrine! They will *not* "contend for the faith." (cf. 2 Tim. 4:3-4)

There's another one that is a *sad* way that this is undermined, and that is by the people who say that the Bible—well, it's a *good* thing, it's the Word of God, it's authoritative... but it's not perfect, it's not without error. The assault on the doctrine of Inerrancy was one of the themes of the last half of the 20th Century, and there are still many smudges of that skirmish left over—people who want to have "respect" for the Word of God, but they *will not say*, "This is the unchanging, *perfect*, inerrant Word of God."

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Many of you, if you've been around for a long time, you've heard this before. I picked this up from Norm Geisler once in a seminar. You talk to people who say that they believe in God, and almost anyone would agree: God *cannot* err. The Lord "cannot lie" (Titus 1:2), He cannot make a mistake (Ps. 147:5), He doesn't do anything wrong (Ps. 18:30). He is perfect. He is infinite (Jer. 23:24), eternal (Is. 43:10), and unchangeable in all of His perfections (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8). So, if *God* cannot err, then the next thing you have to say is, "The *Word* of God cannot err." (Ps. 119:128, 160; Is. 45:19b; Jn. 17:17)

How can a perfect God who cannot err speak or write error? That's an oxymoron! That's a contradiction! The Word of God *cannot* err! Therefore, the Bible—which *is* the Word of God—cannot err. If it is the Word of God, *it cannot err!* If it *has* an error, it is not from God (Deut. 18:22). If man has *introduced* an error into it, well, let's clean that up! But *God's Word* cannot err! So *if* the Bible is the Word of God, *it must be inerrant!* And don't let anybody confuse you on that.

Another way that this is being undermined today is the subjectivity of people's concept of what it means to be a Christian. The inevitable consequence of the Charismatic Movement is the idea that God is still giving revelation today, and therefore the Bible is not complete—the Canon is not closed; God is still speaking today.

We had Brother Justin Peters here not terribly long ago, talking about how God speaks to you through His Word. You have been well-taught on that. God does not speak to you through feelings, through inner impressions, through an audible voice. He does not give personal prophetic words to one person to give to another in the Body of Christ.

One of the most common ways that this principle is violated is when people say that God speaks to you in prayer. Patently wrong! A misunderstanding. The very *definition* of prayer is the *inferior* one beseeching the *superior* One! That's what prayer is. God speaks to you in His Word. His "sheep hear" His "voice" (Jn. 10:27) which is His Word. You speak to Him in prayer. Yes, it is a two-way communication: You speak to Him in prayer; He speaks to you in His Word.

If you *have* one of those feelings, and you say, "Well, I just feel like the Lord would have me do that!"—well, if it's legitimate, that's because you understand His Word, and you are connecting a circumstance with a piece of wisdom from the Word of God, and you *should* have those desires...*but that's not God giving revelation!* If God *ever* speaks, it has to be *inerrant*, and of *equal* authority to the Scriptures.

And then there are those who redefine faith. Faith is *not* a "force." There is a promotion that I hear on the radio fairly often that says: "Faith and fear are opposite forces." I *cringe* every time I hear that! Faith is not a "force." It's not like you have to ratchet yourself up to develop the level of faith that moves mountains. What you *need* is unshrinking faith in God, who is the One who *made* the mountains—and if He wants to move one, He can. Faith is not a "force." The "Word Faith Movement" tells you that there is power in the words that you speak in faith. Not true! Don't be taken in by that one (cf. Ps. 62:11).

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The next spiritual goose-bump coming is Number 6. One Faith, and then: One Baptism. Verse 5—"...one Lord, one faith, *one baptism*..."

This is the one of these seven that is probably less obvious than the others, and I think it's the most misunderstood of this seven-part inspired list of things to be committed to. You get yourself off the rails if you look at this and say, "Okay, which kind of baptism is the one *true* baptism?"—because there are *many* kinds of baptism.

The Greek word for "baptism" is used in the New Testament even to refer to ceremonial washings associated with converting to Judaism; you would do a "washing" in that way (e.g., Heb. 9:10).

Prior to the New Testament time, there were baptisms associated with the Babylonian mystery religions; those are the oldest examples we have of people declaring allegiance to a deity by being immersed in water in the name of that deity—just like what we call "baptism."

Or, does it start with the baptism of John the Baptist, and then build from there? Or, is it specifically referring to the baptism of new converts in water? Or, is he talking about infant baptism? Or, is he referring to the baptism of "fire" (Matt. 3:11)—or, the baptism of judgment (cf. vs. 12), which is yet to come?

Or, is it the Baptism of the Holy Spirit? Ah, now, *there's* one you can sink your teeth into, because *we know* that's true for every believer: First Corinthians 12:13—"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." So that's part of the work of the Spirit, which is of the "unity of the Spirit" which we "preserve...in the bond of peace." The Holy Spirit places every believer into the Body of Christ; the Holy Spirit indwells every believer (Rom. 8:9)—so, there we have it! And some say, "Well, that has to be the "one baptism."

Yeah, but—*no, it doesn't*, because there is *also* the Baptism of Judgment which is yet to come. Oh, and what about when Jesus, before He left, said, Baptize those who believe in Me "in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19)?

It's easy to get confused on all that stuff. But let me tell you: There is a very clear solution to that. The form of the Greek word here clarifies this whole matter for us. New Testament Greek is more sophisticated and precise than English, and sometimes *tiny* distinctions are *very important*. There are a couple places in the New Testament where the difference between a singular and a plural is *the whole crux* of a doctrine!

This is one of those times where a little tiny distinction is in order. So, let me give you a little tiny Greek lesson that will make this clear. As you start to work through "one baptism," you have to look carefully at the word. The root of this family of words that comes into English as "baptize," "baptism," "Baptist," "Baptizer"—all of those words—they are not *translated* into English; they are *transliterated* into English.

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A "translation" is where you say, "Here's what the word means in its original language. Now, what in this other language means the same thing as that?" That's a *translation*—that's giving the meaning of a word. A *transliteration* is where you take the letters from the alphabet of the original language and you match them up with the corresponding letters of the alphabet in the other language.

All of these words that have "b-a-p-t" in them—they all come from the root word *baptō*. It means: "to dip"—as in, "onion dip," if you want to call it that. When the word was used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament—the Septuagint—it was used primarily for dyeing cloth. You don't dye cloth by spraying it, you "dip" it—you soak it. In the New Testament, this word is used for dipping one's finger in water—the Rich Man wanted Lazarus to "dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue" (Lk. 16:24); and it's also used for Jesus when He "dipped the morsel" that He "gave" to "Judas" at the Passover meal (Jn. 13:26). That's the *root* word—very *unusual* in the New Testament; only a couple of times.

The word that is built on that root concept of dipping is the verb *baptizō*. It means—not surprisingly—"to dip *fully*," or, "to immerse." It's even used for a ship being overwhelmed and sinking. So the idea is: immersion.

Now, when you use that word in the "middle voice"—something else that we also don't do in English—that is where you *do* the action of the verb, but you also *receive* the action of the verb, so you do it for yourself. This is the word that can be used for washing yourself—or, bathing—and it can be *either* in the sense of hygiene: making yourself clean; or, it can be used in a symbolic way, and that's like the "washings" that were associated in converting to Judaism.

Not surprisingly, *baptizō* is the word that the Holy Spirit chose to use for immersion as a symbolic rite—as something of spiritual imagery (e.g., Rom. 6:3-5). This is the verb that is used in the New Testament for *every* act of someone being baptized.

It was used for the baptism of John the Baptist. It was used for the baptism performed on Jesus' early followers; remember, John was still baptizing, and then there were people being baptized in Jesus' name—His disciples were doing the baptisms in His name, and there was an exact parallel between that (Jn. 3:26). It was used for the baptism of the first batch of believers after Jesus ascended: the "three thousand" that believed in Acts 2:41; and then all the Jews who believed in the following chapters—same thing, same word, same ritual performed.

Then you get up to Acts Chapter 8, and it was used for the baptism of the Samaritans. Remember, Jesus promised: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea *and Samaria*" (Acts 1:8)—that first firebreak was to get to the "half-breeds" who were not fully Jewish. When Philip took the Gospel to them, they were baptized *exactly* the same as the Jews were (Acts 8:5, 12).

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The word is used in Acts Chapter 9, Verse 18, to describe when Saul of Tarsus "was baptized," as he became the Apostle Paul (cf. Acts 13:9).

In Acts Chapter 10, Verses 47 and 48, this is what was used to describe the symbol that was performed with immersion in water on the first *Gentile* converts. "...you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, *and even to the remotest part of the earth*" (Acts 1:8)—that's another way of describing all of the non-Jews, all of the Gentiles. After Peter preached to them in Acts Chapter 10, they were baptized just *exactly* like their Jewish brethren and their Samaritan brethren were baptized.

In Acts Chapter 11, Peter used this word to describe the baptism of John the Baptist, *and* he used it to describe the promise of the baptism with the Holy Spirit—so, you get *two* of them there! So, is that "two" of the "one baptism"? Well, no; don't get confused just yet.

Go up to Acts Chapter 16, Verse 15—*exactly* the same thing described the baptism of Lydia. She was from Thyatira; she was the first convert from Europe, who was baptized after she responded to Paul's teaching.

You have exactly the same thing used again in Acts Chapter 16, Verse 33; that's where Paul and Barnabas baptized the Philippian jailer and his family, after he and they had "believed" (vs. 34).

Then in Chapter 18, let's go back and pick up another Jew along the way: Crispus; he was "the leader of the synagogue" in Corinth (vs. 8), and he was "baptized" just like all of the others had been (1 Cor. 1:14). And then, that verse also describes the first batch of Gentiles to believe in Corinth.

Then in Acts Chapter 19, you get another one of those twofers—or, "threefers," if you will; it refers to some disciples who had been "baptized...into John's baptism" (vs. 3)—John the Baptist—but at that point, they hadn't heard the rest of the Good News; then they were "baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (vs. 5) once they heard the rest of the Gospel, and heard about the Holy Spirit.

In Acts Chapter 22, when the Apostle Paul was defending himself before some of his accusers, he made a big deal about including the fact that he was "baptized" in the name of Jesus (vs. 16).

So, if you want to summarize this, you have that word *baptō*: "to dip"; now you have this verb *baptizō*, which refers to "placing someone underwater"—and we bring them back up, too. This word describes the baptism by immersion of *every believer you can find* in the early generation of the Church—everyone who believes in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, whether Jew, Samaritan, or Gentile. Every time in the Book of Acts when someone turns to Christ, what happens next? He or she—or they, if it's a group—were all baptized by immersion (e.g., Acts 8:38; cf. Jn. 3:23); and the Church has *always* baptized new believers ever since.

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As a matter of fact, in *most* cultures, it's different from our wild, wild West where we live here. In *most* cultures—and I have witnessed this very specifically in the Russian Church—you hear the Gospel there, you turn to Christ, you profess your faith in Him. The first thing *they* do is bring you to church, put you up in front of the church, and you declare, in public, your faith in Jesus Christ. And the Brothers—we would call them Elders and Deacons—come up and pray for you. Then you are taken under their wing; they teach you some basic doctrine in the fundamentals of the faith; and then, they bring you to the day of baptism. You are immersed in water. They sing, they rejoice. And then, after you come out of that water, you are considered a member of the church, and you are *accountable* to be "diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." You are *proclaiming* your commitment that you are going to be part of that "hive" that "swarms" around these truths, and clings to all of those who swarm. And that's how you become a church member; and then, you go back to the church building and you have communion for the first time. So, in *most* places, it is connected with church membership. Now, that is not a lockstep rule stated by Scripture, but you can see the logic of it being done that way.

So, the verb for the symbolic act is *baptizō*. The noun that describes that symbolic act is *baptismos*. That's where our word "baptism" comes from; take the word *baptismos* and drop off the "os"—that's exactly where that word comes from.

Now, here's how we're going to clear this up. You have all passed your Greek lesson. There will not be a quiz. But remember I told you, sometimes little tiny differences clear the air, and explain things? The word used in Ephesians Chapter 4, Verse 5—"one baptism"—is *not baptō*; it is not *baptizō*; it is not *baptismos*; it's *baptisma*—just put your mother on the end of the word: "m-a" instead of "m-o-s."

And here is the significance of that: *Baptisma*—yes, it *does* relate to the act of baptism; but when you put that "m-a" ending on it, it emphasizes *the results* of, and the *product* of, the act of baptism. So in our verse, Paul is *not* saying there is one true act of water baptism! There's a whole bunch of them: *at least* John the Baptist, Jesus, Baptism of the Holy Spirit, baptism of judgment—and two of those are in water. What he *is* saying is: There is one true *product* of baptism, collectively; there is *one true group of people* who are identified with Jesus Christ through faith, as symbolized in immersion. In other words: *one true group* which is the result of *one true baptism*.

So, is he talking about *water* baptism, or is he talking about *Spirit* baptism? He is talking about *both*, because they *both* have to do with all of those people who are united to the "one faith" in the "one Lord" in the one church, according to "the faith."

It's not surprising that there are several ways that confusion has been introduced about "one baptism." There are those who say, "Well, the one *real* baptism is the one that *saves you!*" I've hinted at it in the last couple of weeks: There are people who preach "Baptismal Regeneration"—"Yeah, it's fine to say you believe in Christ, but boy, until you hit the water, you're not saved; and that is how you are regenerated."

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Well, that's not true. The error of that is pretty obvious. Ephesians 2:8-9—"By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; *not* as a result of works..."—and baptism is certainly a human work.

Then there are also those who get confused over the *mode* of baptism. Immersion is the *only* method of baptism that you can support from the Scripture. *It's what the word means!* The word *means* "immerse." Sprinkling and pouring—the other two methods of baptism—were introduced *centuries later*. Interestingly, there are words in the New Testament that clearly mean "to sprinkle" and "to pour." They are *never* used in conjunction with baptism. So this is not a happy Bible study for your Presbyterian or Lutheran brothers and sisters. There are people who preach the right Gospel, and they don't get that part right.

Regarding the *next* thing that doesn't fit, thankfully they don't do immersion: it's *infant* baptism; it's not nice to take a baby and force it fully submerged in water. It is foreign to the New Testament (e.g., Acts 8:12; 16:31, 34). But again, there are people who preach the right Gospel, and get this part wrong. But here's where the thinking comes from: They say there is an analogy between circumcision in the Old Testament, where circumcision is the symbolic way of saying, "You belong to the Covenant People of God," and they say *that* is replaced in the New Testament by baptism, which makes you part of the Covenant People of God. But in the New Testament, you never have that practiced! It is always based upon having *personal saving faith*, and you *cannot have* personal saving faith in Jesus Christ as a newborn! There's a *cognitive* element of that, there's an understanding part of that (Rom. 10:14, 17); there's a declaration of the lordship of Christ as part of that (Rom. 10:9). And the faith of parents—wonderful as it is—does not work for children by osmosis, or by association. So we don't believe that the practice of infant baptism is supported by Scripture. I have baptized a whole bunch of people who were baptized as children and have now come to faith in Christ, and want to declare their personal faith in Christ. I'm married to one who went through that process.

And understand here: Please be charitable to those who are brothers and sisters in Christ who hold to a different view here. You may have heard of the term "catechism"—it means teaching by question and answer. And so, here's what the thinking is: "We'll take the newborn baby; we'll sprinkle some water"—some associate it with naming the child; sometimes there are Godparents involved; there are a lot of traditions that spring up around that—and that's the parents saying, "We are going to bring this child up in the nurture and instruction of the Lord." As the child is raised, he or she is then "catechized"—taught. They come to a certain point at which they have completed the catechism, usually rather parallel to the Jewish idea of Bar Mitzvah—now you are, on your own, a child of the Covenant. And they say, "Okay, now you're ready for your own declaration of faith." And then, they go through a process—and I'll bet some of you in the room have been "confirmed." So what they're saying is, "Okay, we baptized you, kind of 'by faith'; and now 10, 12, 13, 14 years later, we're going to say, 'Okay, *confirmed*'—sort of like, "The call on the field is confirmed." That's what they're saying. Well, what do you do with people who are not born to Christian parents? My parents certainly didn't baptize *me!* I was Sanforized—I was pre-shrunk—but I wasn't *changed* in that way.

Sermon Title: The Theology Of Unity (Part 2)
Scripture Text: Eph. 4:5-6 (Ephesians #21)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 11-7-21

So don't get confused about the *mode* of it. There *is* confusion, but it is pretty clear what the Scriptures say, and we will do our best to practice that—and practice charity toward those who see it otherwise.

I told you there are those who believe that you're not really saved until you are baptized. There are also those who believe that, yeah, you can be saved, but you don't receive the Holy Spirit until baptism. Not so (e.g., Rom. 8:9).

Then there are brothers and sisters in Christ who teach that *there is no water baptism at all*. That's a small segment of the Body of Christ, but they teach that baptism was *only* for *Jewish* believers, and that it is not for Gentiles at all (contra Matt. 28:19). That's why I showed you: All throughout the early Church in the Book of Acts, that first generation in the Apostolic Age, it was *exactly the same* for Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles; and the Church has picked it up and carried on ever since. Now, since water baptism is *not* a condition of salvation—it is a public *declaration* of faith, but it is not something that you need in order to get into Heaven (Lk. 23:43)—then I don't think that those who say there should be no water baptism are necessarily teaching a false Gospel; that's not the issue, but I do think it is a misunderstanding of what it means.

Now, here's the key to this whole thing: It's *the word!* If this word ended "m-o-s" instead of "m-a," we would *have* to pick one. But it's saying *all of this* results in *one group of people*, united in the "one body" around the one truth by the "one Spirit." And so: one true body of baptized believers who belong to Christ, indwelt by the Holy Spirit—that is the "one *baptisma*."

Number 7—your last chance at a spiritual goose-bump all day long: One God. Verse 6—"...one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all." This is "the unity" built around the specific *singularity*, if you will, of God.

There is only one God. He is one essence, eternally existing in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is one God, and that is the God that He is. And that is what the Bible teaches. Have you noticed that all three Persons of the Godhead are here in Verses 4, 5, and 6? *You cannot be a Non-Trinitarian and be saved* (see 1 Jn. 2:23; cf. Mk. 3:29), because this is the essence of the theology of our unity.

"God" here clearly refers to the Father: "one God *and* Father"; or "one God, *even* the Father," if you want to read it that way. He is defined here in terms of a threefold relationship with His children. He is "over all"—all of those who belong to Him are under His control and His sovereignty. He is "through all"—that's describing that when God does the word of ministering in the Body of the Church, He does it through us. "Over all and through all," He uses us. That's why the idea of a Christian not committed to a local church *is a Non-Christian!* *You can be saved* and not be in a local church, but you *sure can't practice Christianity and not be in a local church*, and I don't think you can *remain* in that situation of not being involved with a local church and not be *terribly convicted* of your rebellion against God! We have to practice all of those "one-anothers" that are mentioned in the New Testament. He works "through" us "all."

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Oh, and by the way: Where do we get the energy to do all that stuff? Well, He is "in all." He actually dwells within us; He has placed the Holy Spirit within us (1 Jn. 3:24; 4:13; cf. Acts 5:32; Rom. 5:5; 1 Cor. 2:12; 2 Cor. 1:22; 2 Cor. 5:5; Eph. 1:13-14).

There are a lot of mis-definitions of God, a lot of ways this is attacked. You've got to understand: He is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19; cf. 2 Cor. 13:14; Jn. 5:23; 2 Cor. 3:17).

Some people deny His personal involvement. That's the idea of the "Deist"—God sort of wound up the Universe and He is letting it run, and He is not paying much attention to it, not involved. That's not true (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3).

Every inadequate or limiting view of the definition of God is an insult to His character and His nature. He is "infinite" (Ps. 147:5; Jer. 23:24), "eternal" (Deut. 33:27; 1 Tim. 1:17), and unchangeable (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8) in every aspect of His perfection!

This is one of the essential points about our "unity" in Christ. God is Three in One: One Essence, eternally existing in Three Persons. So, God *is* the Father, God *is* the Holy Spirit, God *is* the Son—but neither the Son, the Holy Spirit, or the Father are to be interchanged with the others. They are all distinct Persons (e.g., Matt. 3:16-17).

When I was young, I remember hearing the name Adlai Stevenson, about every four years. I was at the age where I was just figuring out elections and stuff like that. He was the Democratic Presidential Nominee twice. He lost to Dwight Eisenhower both times. He ran a third time, and that time the Democratic Party decided *not* to choose him, and let him lose again. But he tried three times for the presidency.

He was one of those people in those days when Republicans and Democrats would argue a bill in the Congress or in the Senate, and then go out and have lunch together and fellowship, and they hadn't committed to hating each other just yet.

He was one of those eloquent, well-spoken people, and he made a particularly well-crafted speech during one of his campaigns. And the story is that after his speech, a woman came up and said, "Governor Stevenson, your speech was magnificent! You'll get the vote of every thinking person in this country!" Stevenson thought for a moment and he answered, "That's not enough. I need a majority!"

What this is saying is: You must be a thinking person when it comes to these things! (see Is. 1:18) It will put you in the minority! *Every one* of those seven points puts you in a minority, compared to the world. We are a *unique* people. Remember the theme-phrase in Ephesians: "in Christ."

Do you want to get your spiritual goose-bumps? Crank it up right now; here's your best chance: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all." And that's all.

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Let's pray:

God our Father, thank You for that succinct description of who You are. "Over all"—oh, how we thank You that You are sovereign! "Through all"—oh, how we thank You that You take us and You redeem us and You justify us and You sanctify us so that You can work through us. And Father, we can only do that which pleases You because You are "in all" of us, having sent Your Spirit to indwell us and to empower us to use the gifts that You have granted to us, that we might build each other up in the faith. Thank You, our Father, for this theology of our unity. As we press on in days to come, we look forward to learning how to practice this unity in every way that we can. But thank You for making us one in Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.