

One

Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace

Ephesians 4:1 | therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,
² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,
³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
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.

(Eph 4:1-6)

One Song

U2 IS, BY SOME MEASURES, the longest lived all-original member band still going. They formed in 1976 when they were only about 15 years old, four classmates, three of whom are professing Christians, would go on to become the biggest act in the world. Of their many hits is the song “**One**,” from their 1992 album *Achtung Baby*. It has been ranked as high as the number one song of all time by *Q Magazine* and voters in one poll gave it the number-one lyric of

all time with its, “One life, with each other, sisters, brothers.” It has been covered by the likes of Joe Cocker, Cowboy Junkies, Mary J. Blige, Johnny Cash, and dozens more.

For a quarter of a century, this song has been a rather interesting choice at [wedding](#). Someone writes, “Many couples choose ‘One’ for the first dance, believing that the line ‘we’re one, but we’re not the same,’ is a declaration of being two individuals who have just joined their lives as one.”¹ In reality, The Edge (U2’s bassist) says it is a “bitter, twisted, vitriolic conversation between two people who’ve been through some nasty, heavy stuff.” Bono (the lead singer) said, “I could never figure out why people want it at their weddings. I have certainly met a hundred people who’ve had it at their weddings. I tell them, ‘Are you mad? It’s about splitting up!’”² It was written as the band was going through some very turbulent spells. Four guys do not spend that much time together in a band with that lifestyle without going through lots of those.

At the same time, they also don’t stay together for 43 years and counting without some serious reconciliation taking

¹ [Sherry Lawrence](#), “One,” U2 Lists: Top 9 U2 Wedding Songs, @U2 (Feb 14, 2011), <https://www.atu2.com/news/u2-lists-top-9-u2-wedding-songs.html>.

² [Bono](#), quoted in [Andrew Leahey](#), “Behind The Song: ‘One,’” *American Songwriter* (Nov 7, 2011), <https://americansongwriter.com/2011/11/behind-the-song-one/>

place from time to time. This song went a long way towards reunifying the long-time friends. “‘One’ literally brought the band back together.”³ Curiously, it was written from Berlin as the Berlin Wall was coming down. Supposedly Bono has said of the song and their reconciliation that it all came about because “God walked through the room.” And so, as much as it is a break-up song, it is also “very much about the duty to stay together.”⁴ Bono said, “It is a song about coming together, but it’s not the old hippie idea of ‘let’s all live together.’ It is, in fact, the opposite. It’s saying, We are one, but weren’t not the same. It’s not saying we even want to get along, but that we have to get along together in this world if it is to survive. It’s a reminder that we have no choice.”⁵

*One love
One blood
One life
You got to do what you should
One life
With each other*

³ Leahey.

⁴ *Blender Magazine*, but as recorded by *Wiki*, without a reference.

⁵ In **Robert Hilburn**, “Pop Music: U2’s Pride (In the Name of Songs): Achtung, babies: Bono and Edge Evaluate One Critic’s Choices for the Group’s 10 best recordings, from ‘I will Follow’ to ‘One,” *LA Times* (Sept 12, 1993), <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1993-09-12-ca-34478-story.html>

*Sisters and my brothers
One life
But we're not the same
We get to carry each other, carry each other*

When people talk about **unity**—oneness—in the church, they very often idealize it, kind of like the hippies that Bono was talking about. That idealization does great damage to the difficulty had in achieving and keeping unity, and therefore also to the incredibly beauty of unity that comes not because everyone is perfect, sinless, totally godly, always has their act together, but precisely because they don't.

How many churches have **split**, how many Christians have divided over things that never should have happened? The old joke is that we will split because of the color of the carpet. Someone wants red. Someone else wants blue. One doesn't like blue, so he gets a bunch of people to get angry with him. They all leave in a huff and start the Second Baptist Church of the Color of Red Carpet down the street. Perhaps it is this long-time example modeled by the corporate church that has made its way into families and businesses and schools where Christians divorce for no reason, quit for bad reasons, turn on their seventh-grade friends for no good

reasons? And this is the mild stuff. We Christians are **not exactly known these days for being one**. How can you be when people do not value unity? But should we value unity? Is unity something to value above all things? Is Bono right? Do we really “**have to get along?**” Is there a right and wrong way to think about that? Ephesians can help us with these questions.

One Text

Overview

Ephesians 4:4-6 has the greatest concentration of the word “**one**” in a three-verse span as you will find anywhere in the Bible. It appears **seven times** in three verses. Seven is the perfect number and “one” is how our passage today finishes. These “ones” become the grounding for the three verses that come prior to them.

Yet, though we will be looking at **Eph 4:1-6**, it is important to see that it is part of a much **larger unit of thought**. **Eph 4:1-16** (or some have 17 finishing off what seems to be a chiasm) is that unit. While “unity” is important, so also is

diversity. It's just like the song, "We're one, *but we're not the same* | *We get to carry each other.*" The passage oscillates back and forth from **diversity** (4:1-2) to **unity** (4:3-6) to **diversity** (4:7-11) to **unity** (4:12-15) to **diversity** (16) forming an A-B-A-B-A pattern with **vv. 7-11** as the center.⁶

This also calls to mind other passages in Paul's letters such as those in **Romans 12:3-8** and **1Co 12:4-31** about "one body" with "many parts" and the "spiritual gifts" that God gives to the body (especially remembering that he has been focusing on the church as a temple made of living stones; **Eph 2:19-22**). In fact, the language of **giving gifts** is found here in **Ephesians 4:7, 8**, and lists of those gifts are given after that, though many people are unaware that those lists actually refer to the gifts that Christ gives his church. It is these gifts that are to be used properly for the creation of the unity within this diverse body called the church. But we will not get into that very much this time.

These 16-17 verses can also be seen as forming a chiasm where, again, the stuff found in vv. 7-11 is the center.

A. "Walk" (1)

⁶ **Dan Claire**, "The Gifts of the Divine Warrior in Ephesians 4:7-11," Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, n.d.), 3 [1-26], *acedemia.edu*, https://www.academia.edu/34296738/The_Gifts_Of_The_Divine_Warrior_in_Ephesians_4_7-11.

every wind of doctrine, human cunning, and crafty deceitful schemes (14). So it isn't like oneness and unity is the *only* or even the main focus of the overarching passage, as some have claimed. There are other things that have to be taken into consideration than just unity.

Unity done rightly is as David said, like the *precious oil on the beard of Aaron* or like the *dew of Mt. Hermon on Mt. Zion* (Ps 133:1-3). Unity for the right reasons, with the right goal. This becomes a replica of heaven itself. But if done only for its own sake, as an end to itself without any consideration of anything else, it can become a mockery like the Martian thought of Jack Nicholson's President James Dale's character told him in *Mars Attacks*, "*Little people. Why can't we all just get along?*" He didn't want unity. But unity is the focus of the first six verses, and even these verses give you its proper perspective. That is what we will turn our attention to now.

Walk In A Manner Worthy of Your Calling (Eph 4:1-3)

We can break Eph 4:1-6 into two halves. The first half is the hinge of the book. It moves us from mostly doctrine

to mostly ethics. What we have learned about God's powerful love in Christ who has won such great victories for us and what he has prayed that we would come corporately and personally to know now moves its way to how we will behave. The transition takes place with the first two words, "I therefore" (Eph 4:1). As I was taught in seminary, when you see a "therefore" always ask what it is there for. Therefore what?

In Greek, the verse begins with the verb "beseech" or "urge." There is an urgency in his voice and in his speech. In whose speech? Paul, "the prisoner for the Lord." He returns to Eph 3:1, "I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles..." But this is more than a reminder. It is inextricably connected to what he is about to say. I urge "you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called..." (4:1).

What is this "calling?" Timothy Gombis makes the very important observation that Eph 3:10 has to be considered here. "Through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" (Eph 3:10). Thus, "The calling of the church is to embody and vindicate the triumph of God in

Christ over the powers and authorities ... The church—along with its coming-into-existence by [Paul’s] preaching—is to be the means by which the powers and authorities come to know the ... wisdom of God. That is, the church is the arena in which the triumph of God in Christ over the rebellious powers is vindicated.” This is our calling in context.⁸

The “prisoner” reference must be inserted here. Identifying himself a “prisoner” is still **not an appeal to pity** or plea for help to get him out. Rather, as Paul is “embracing a position of shame while exulting in the cosmic purpose to which God has appointed him. In the same way, [you] are to live in accordance with [your] calling.”⁹ Or again, “Just as Paul’s position of shame and humiliation makes manifest the triumph of God in Christ, so too [you] are to follow his example and see to it that [you] actualize the triumph of God in Christ in their life together as the community of God’s people.” It is, in a word, a return to the **paradoxes** of Ch. 3. of a glorious calling and a shameful present existence.¹⁰ As God is triumphing in his church even as Paul

⁸ Gombis, *Dissertation*, 109-110.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 110.

writes this very letter to these very people from prison, so God will triumph through over the powers and rulers as they follow his example.

But **Paul is not asking them to go to prison**. No, it is his humility and humiliation for their sake that serves as an example for what he is about to tell them. In this way, Christians who **pray for nothing but peace** and well-being in this life and that nothing bad should befall them for Christ's sake are missing out on the profound meaning that the suffering of God's people can have upon others of God's people. It is rather staggering to think that in a world where everyone questions why God would allow suffering that his own people do not understand that it is in the very suffering for Christ's sake that the answer to that question is found. For in it, God's triumph over the powers is vindicated.

But don't get me wrong. It **isn't that Paul went looking for jail** and execution. Far from it. **He defended himself** vigorously no less than five times, both informally and formally before the courts (**Acts 21:37-22:21; 23:1-5; 24:10-21; 25:8-11; 26:1-32**) with truth against the charges that were brought against him by the Jews for teaching against the OT

and for bringing the Ephesian Trophimus into the Temple upon pains of death.

But Jesus had told him “Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome” (Acts 23:11). So, Paul appealed to Caesar (25:11), his right as a Roman Citizen, even though he could have gone free in Jerusalem if he hadn’t done that (26:32)! Surely he knew that such an appeal most likely could mean his own death. But he was predestined for this moment, so that he could write Ephesians from prison in Rome. And part of eternal plan of God was so that 2,000 years later, you Christians here in Colorado could learn to behave as he did for his Lord and for Christ’s Body—the church, so that the manifold wisdom of God might continue to be proclaimed in heavenly places.

So what precisely is their calling supposed to be? It is to emulate the Apostle himself in the church “with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:2-3). This is how they are to “walk.” Walking is different from standing. Walking is doing something. Walking is different from running. It is doing something

slowly, over a long period of time. J. I. Packer called it keeping “**in step with the Spirit**” in one of his books.¹¹

There are four ways this is to be done in **vs. 2**: **humility, gentleness, patience, love**. These result in two things in **vs. 3**: **unity** of the Spirit and the bonds of **peace**. What can we say about them?

Holy Spirit. First, **the big picture** is that we are talking here about things of the Spirit. He speaks of the **unity “of the Spirit.”** He tells the Philippians to stand firm in “**one Spirit, with one mind**” in a passage parallel to this (**Php 1:27**, “**let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ**”). In another parallel passage on spiritual gifts, “**In one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit**” (**1Co 12:13**).

Peace is certainly related to the Spirit. “**For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit**” (**Rom 14:17**). “**The mind set on the Spirit is life and peace**” (**Rom 8:6**).

¹¹ **J. I. Packer**, *Keep in Step with the Spirit: Finding Fullness in Our Walk with God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1984). This is an excellent book on sanctification, especially in light of the Keswick/Higher Life/Holiness views of sanctification; its appendix on Romans 7 is especially helpful.

And then there is the list of nouns themselves. Do they not remind you of the “fruit of the Spirit” in **Galatians 5:22** which include love (check), joy, peace (check), patience (check), kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness (check), and self-control? Three of the four nouns in **vs. 2** and the result of peace (**vs. 3**) are found in the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians.

Having the Spirit first is interesting, because what we are about to see is a kind of reversal of the way our Creeds will later speak. **Vv. 3-4** is the Spirit. **Vs. 4** is the “Lord” (Christ). **Vs. 6** is the Father. So this Spirit here is vital, because he is the beginning of the grounding of the triumphant work of God in the church. He is the most immediately accessible of the Three Persons because he is dwelling in us having been sent to us by God. And as grounding, the unity that we are to be eager to maintain is not an end to itself. God is the end to which we strive for unity, for the Holy Spirit is God and it is his work in us that becomes the motivation for our work together in the church. We do it for his sake.

Unity and Peace. Someone says, “We preserve the *unity* of the church when we work to avoid personal strife with fellow believers.”¹² Did you hear what he said? You have *to work* to avoid personal strife. It is work. It does not come naturally. The longer you are together, the more work it takes.

Often that work doesn't work and so we need to seek *peace*. But the key here it to notice that *both unity and peace are what we already have in the Spirit*. It is a reality. This is why we are to “maintain” it. When that spiritual reality is not present in the physical world in a church and between people, then we have to put on these other virtues by humbly, gently, patiently, and lovingly seeking reconciliation and/or forgiveness. Don't live in a utopia in your thinking about the physical reality. Live like Bono suggested. “*We're not the same.*” Yet, do live in a utopia regarding the spiritual reality. “*We are one.*” That's not wishful thinking, but the facts. That utopia brought by the Spirit, an unchangeable reality in heaven, is the foundation of your seeking to bring these things to pass here and now, so that you might act as you are, so that the powers of heaven might be confounded

¹² John F. Brug, “Forward 100: If You Hold to My Teaching,” *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 100 (2003): 10.

at the wisdom of God being displayed in his church. “We get to carry each other.”

We can move to the particulars of **vs. 2**. These are shocking things that the world knows little to nothing about, all the more as it loses any sense of Christian or even a semblance of transcendent (God-given) virtues known even to Greeks. Yet, this “practical section of Ephesians begins with an urgent appeal for *all* Christians, not just to believe correctly, but to conduct themselves in accordance with God’s call upon each of their lives (**Eph 1:4–5; 1:12; Php 1:27; Col 1:10**). The call of God upon one’s life should dictate one’s daily behavior.”¹³

Humility. Paul starts with the most self-abasing virtue. Humility is the opposite of pride, the opposite of self, the opposite of iPad, Youtube, Myspace, Facebook, and MeTV. It is “the Christian virtue that enables us to be humble about ourselves, our calling and our gifts, to use both our calling and our gifts humbly for the sake of the church” (**Erasmus Sarcerius**, *Annotations on Ephesians*). To the Romans the Apostle said, “I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think

¹³ **Craig Loscalzo**, “Ephesians 4:1-16,” *Review and Expositor* 85:4 (1988): 688 [687-91].

with sober judgment ... Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight” (Rom 12:3, 16).

People with lots of biblical knowledge can be prone to the vice of **pride**, as can Christians who have been granted well-paying jobs, many material blessings, powerful positions of authority in the community, and so on. In other words, most of us. But Calvin was pointed when he said, “Paul puts humility first because he is about to speak about unity, and humility is the first step toward achieving it. Humility in turn produces gentleness, and that makes us patient. By bearing with our fellow believers we keep that unity that otherwise would be broken a hundred times a day.”

Gentleness. Also called meekness, it doesn't mean letting yourself be someone else's personal punching bag. It **does mean** not being harsh and full of rage at others. It means controlling your anger, not venting any old time you feel like it. In his masterful terrifying expose on Stalin's Russia, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn writes from the perspective of his interrogator who find himself in the midst of a prisoner who has refused to give in to his methods of torture,

Don't control your fury! It's tremendously satisfying, that outburst! Let your anger have its way; don't set any bounds to it! Don't hold yourself back! That's when interrogators spit in the open mouth of the accused! And shove his face into a full cuspidor (spittoon)! That's the state of mind in which they drag priests around by their long hair! Or urinate in a kneeling prisoner's face! After such a storm of fury you feel yourself a real honest-to-God man!¹⁴

Reading his book, you come quickly to realize that basically the entirety of Communist Russia had abandoned gentleness for rage. 30,000,000 ++ people paid the price with their lives.

This base animalistic takeover of the passions of hate and rage are eclipsing what it means to be an image-bearer endowed with virtue like gentleness in the West and among Christians. Gentleness does not flow naturally from us and it seems like many do not want it to. In the name of being “right” people trounce on fellow man, Christians pounce upon fellow brothers and meekness “that Christian virtue by which we live quietly and peacefully with our neighbor, not getting angry with him and not treating him roughly

¹⁴ Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. *The Gulag Archipelago: With a foreword by Jordan B. Peterson* (London: Vintage Digital, 2018), Chapter 4.

because of his lack of skill, his low social standing or his weakness” (**Sarcarius**) is an endangered species. It must not be that way with us.

Patience. Patience is that virtue that begins the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians. Perhaps it is first there because **who has time for patience?** But this is the virtue by which we put up with one another in love. It is the same as mutual forgiveness and understanding. With patience that person that you most can't stand to be around, the thing you most don't want to do is received with gladness.

Love. And love. That which Paul has just prayed God would give the knowledge of the power of God in Christ for you. God's love for you in Christ. That which is the Cornerstone for all your actions in this life, the virtue of bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things, enduring all things, never endingly (**1Co 13:7-8**). Love finishes off the list. **Thomas Watson** said of a time that almost all Reformed people idealize if not idolize as the highest age of biblical Christianity in all of human history, “**In the primitive times, there was so much love among the godly, as set the heathens a wondering; and now there is so little, as may set Christians**

a blushing.”¹⁵ If he could see the Christian world today, what would the good Puritan have to say?

As with the rest of these virtues, I have seen some Reformed people particularly prone to not obeying the Apostle. Not all. Many that I know make it their urgent task to try. But we all must try harder. It isn't that this isn't in other circles too. But it most certainly is in ours. I know men, leaders, pastors—and more than one—who are concerned only with being right to the degree that they will justify any and every kind of violation of loving their neighbor as themselves, as if the only doctrine God cares about is dogmatic theology and not the Ten Commandments. Indeed, if you do not say God cares at least as much about how you treat others as he does what you think of him, then you have no business calling yourself a Christian, for you neither know God nor have even met him.

Martin Bucer said,

All these things serve to maintain unity, because their opposites are the main reason why unity is destroyed. Dissension is the result of pride and arrogance. Pride never allows for

¹⁵ Thomas Watson, “The Godly Man’s Picture Drawn with a Scripture-Pencil,” in *Discourses on Important and Interesting Subjects, Being the Select Works of the Rev. Thomas Watson*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh; Glasgow: Blackie, Fullarton, & Co.; A. Fullarton & Co., 1829), 514.

submission, it is not content with its lot, it twists everything the wrong way, it does not accept the will of God. Pride is the cause of anger, because the person who gets angry thinks he has been looked down on and therefore seeks revenge, because when somebody thinks too highly of himself, he thinks that nobody has the right to do anything that would make him angry.

(**Martin Bucer**, *Lectures on Ephesians*)

Georg Major (1502-74) the German Reformer summarized it well, “In this verse Paul reminds us that each one of us must confess and reflect on our own faults, mistakes and infirmity so as not to be too hard and bitter toward others. We will not be like that as long as we see that faults and errors are present in us as well” (**Georg Major**, *Commentary on Ephesians*).

The Solid Ground Upon Which We Walk (Eph 4:4-6)

But apparently it is not enough to have three chapters of doctrine to ground our behavior for Paul. Even after only two or three verses urging us on to right behavior, the Apostle already has to **take a break and return to our grounding**.

In some ways, he has already done that with the Spirit. **How prone** he must believe we sheep are to wander into legalism or antinomianism, turning our behavior into our purpose rather than seeing it as a means to a wholly different end? May this be a lesson to our most intelligent Christians that we are all prone forget God's grace after literally just one sentence of being told how we are to behave.

The Apostle now roots the unity and peace that we enjoy objectively in the Spirit and to which we are to strive to mirror in the flesh in **seven theological essentials** that we all have in common. These are doctrines undistilled, powerful to bring joy and action in their rawest, purest, most potent form.

Recall what we was with **the Three Persons** earlier. Someone has said of **vv. 4-6**, “**Here the sequence of the confessional elements collected in the Apostolic, Nicene, and later Christian Creeds is anticipated in reverse order: first the Spirit is praised, then Christ, then the Father.**”¹⁶ If you were to think of vv. 4-6 as a primitive confession of faith, each part of the confession is unfolded in a triad of about equal length: “body-Spirit-hope”; “Lord-faith-baptism”;

¹⁶ **Markus Barth**, *Ephesians: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on Chapters 4-6*, vol. 34A, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 463.

“God the Father of all” who is called the Father “over, through, and in all.”

Let me also call your attention to the repeated ([seven times](#)) emphasis on the term “[one](#),” where there are three sets of pairs forming a triad of couplets.

- [one body](#) (=the church)—[one Lord](#) (the church’s head, Christ)
- [one Spirit](#) (by which Christ is confessed)—[one faith](#) (1 Co 12:3)
- [one hope](#) (accepted in baptism)—[one baptism](#) (1 Co 12:13)¹⁷

Thus, with symbolic numbers “one” and “three” and “seven” we enter into a great mystery of the One Triune God of Scripture who is perfect in his ways and works towards his adopted children. These in turn root our behavior in a mystical way.

Our unity is rooted not in wishful thinking or in the whims and ever-changing ideas of a democracy, but in historical events that we categorize in the form of doctrine. [One body](#). The first is “[one body](#)” ([Eph 4:4](#)). This refers to [the living temple](#) he talked about at the end of Ch. 3, though he also brought up the body in that chapter ([Eph 3:6](#)). Bodies are complicated things, made up of many parts ([1Co 12:20](#)).

¹⁷ [Ralph P. Martin](#), *Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon*, Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1991), 48.

In this way, the body image describes both diversity and unity.

This body is an objective reality. It consists of all believers who are in Christ today, yesterday, and tomorrow. We here in 2019 are part of the same body Paul was speaking to. In this way, you can think of your own body when you were young and how you look much different today, and yet you still have the same body, even though every cell in your body has been replaced, perhaps several times over.

If we are all one body, then it makes no sense to seek to harm it through division or hostility. Who cuts off their own leg for fun? Who hurts themselves on purpose? That is what mentally ill people do. And yet, this one body is not everybody. In the [parallelism](#) of the verses, the body belongs to this head. Bodies without heads are dead. The head gives life.

One Lord. This is where the “[one Lord](#)” ([Eph 4:5](#)) comes into play. Lord (Gk: Kurios) is the word Jesus was often called by the Disciples. And yet, it is also the word that usually translates Adonai from the OT, who is himself often the Second Person of the Trinity (cf. [Ps 110:1](#)). One Lord is not referring to the Spirit or the Father. It most certainly is not

referring to Zeus or Baal (both of which mean “Lord”). It is referring to the Son, for he is the Head of the body (**Col 1:18**). There is only one Lord Jesus Christ, the one presented in the pages of Holy Scripture. If you are not in Christ, then you are not in the body. If you are in Christ, then know that the unity you are to strive for on earth is true because you all have one Lord.

One Spirit. This objective unity is further manifested in the repeat of the word “Spirit.” The third “one” is the Spirit (**Eph 4:4**). He is the Third Person of the Trinity. No other spirit is the one Spirit. Not your spirit. Certainly not an evil spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who regenerates us, puts us in the Body, and gives us our unity and peace together.

One Faith. We are put into the body through believing in something that we confess. Thus, the **parallel** to the Spirit is one Faith (**Eph 4:5**). Faith should be capitalized here in my opinion. It isn't talking about having faith, for I have my faith and you have your faith and that would mean there are many faiths rather than one. It is talking about confessing The Faith. One Faith. Jude said, “**Contend for The Faith that was once for all delivered to the saints**” (**Jude 1:3**). He didn't say “a faith” but “the faith.” There is only one Faith

and that is the content of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and what he has done for us and how we are saved by faith through grace. Not any old faith. Not another faith like Buddhism or Islam. Not whatever we decide to believe out of The Faith (for that is the definition of “heresy.” Heresy is a “choice”).

One Hope. Our collective Faith in Christ leads us to “one hope” (Eph 4:4). Paul has spoken about it as “hoping in Christ” (Eph 1:12). It is the “hope to which he has called you” (18). Previously we were “without hope and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12). And so our hope is that we are with God and will be with God forever. Our hope is that he will bring us to heaven even as he has justified us and taken away our sin. This, he says, “belongs to your call.”

One baptism. Our hope seems to be paralleled one baptism (Eph 4:5). It is easy to understand the Body and its Lord (Head) and the Spirit and the Faith we confess by him, but what is the relationship between hope and baptism? There are no other passages that closely relate these two things. The key is trying to figure out what baptism refers to. Most have taken it to speak of our baptism in water. But why? Lloyd-Jones notices that water baptism “undoubtedly raises

a query in the minds of many, as to how this ‘one baptism’ promotes unity, because it is a notorious fact that the whole question of baptism has frequently led to discussion and division and separation.”¹⁸ True, it wasn’t that way in Paul’s day, but it certainly is in our own.

Paul doesn’t specify that this is what he is talking about. Besides, there is in fact more than one baptism in the Scripture. In the NT alone we have the baptism of John (Matt 3:1-6), Jesus in the Jordan (Matt 3:16). His second baptism on the cross (Mark 10:38-39). The baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). And the baptism which saves (1Pe 3:21). Without going into detail about what these all are, surely we can agree that they are not all the same. That doesn’t mean that they don’t have overlapping meaning. Of course, they do. Nor does it mean that something like our water baptism isn’t a sign and seal of a spiritual reality. It surely does.

But let’s look at Peter who talks about a baptism that “saves you.” He says it is “Not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1Pe 3:21). I would argue that Peter is talking here about an inner baptism, a washing

¹⁸ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Christian Unity: An Exposition of Ephesians 4:1-16* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980), 120

or sprinkling of the heart as Hebrews puts it (**Heb 10:22**). Sprinkling is a form of OT baptism, though it isn't the only form. Notice how it clearly distinguishes two kinds of baptism: “Our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (**Heb 10:22**). The latter outwardly signifies the former, but it does not save you.

I believe it is our common baptism into Christ when we are saved that Paul is talking about here. Lloyd-Jones calls it, “that which baptism represents and signifies.”¹⁹ This is the “one baptism.” It is a spiritual baptism. One scholar writes,

It refers metaphorically to the believer's baptism into Christ's death, speaking of the believers' union with Christ in his death and resurrection. Baptism signifies identification as seen in the baptism of Israel into Moses as they went through the Red Sea (1 Cor 10:2) and the baptism of the disciples with reference to Christ's death (Mark 10:38) ... This same concept is seen in other NT passages (Rom 6:1-11; Gal 3:27; Col 2:12) ... This inward reality is all too often missed. It serves as the basis of the outward ritual. Hence, the “one baptism” most likely refers to the internal reality of having

¹⁹ Lloyd-Jones, 122. He rejects that it refers to baptismal regeneration by water baptism, the mode of baptism (sprinkling or pouring or immersion), or to the “rite of baptism”

been baptized into (identified with) the “one Lord” by means of the “one faith” mentioned in this verse.²⁰

All I would add is that it is through this inward washing by faith that we come by our hope in Christ. That then is [the link between baptism of hope](#).

“One baptism” pictures the divine seal on the one faith in the one Lord. [Water] baptism is the outward and visible sign in water by which those who believe the gospel, repent of their sins, and acknowledge Jesus as Lord are publicly incorporated in the body of Christ ... The point here is that Jewish and Gentile believers alike acknowledge Jesus as the “one Lord,” share a common faith in him, and are initiated into Jesus Christ and his church in ... baptism (Gal 3:27).²¹

One God and Father. The final and [seventh](#) “one” is, appropriately, the one God and Father ([Eph 4:6](#)). From the Spirit to the Son to the Father, Paul has now summed up our great God. The Father is the source of all, and he is the God

²⁰ [Harold W. Hoehner](#), *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 518.

²¹ [David S. Dockery](#), “Ephesians 4:1-6,” *Review and Expositor* 88:1 (1991): 81 [79-82]. Unfortunately, Dockery does not distinguish these baptisms and so believes that it is water baptism that is in mind. Nevertheless, he gets the bigger point.

and Father of all. He is “over all and through all and in all” (6). He is Almighty. He is all-knowing. He is all-present. When we are saved, he becomes our Father in a special sense, though even before that “we are all his offspring.” Thus, it is appropriate to end with the Father as the perfect seven come to their completion.

When you understand the oneness of our perfect-seven-fold faith, when you understand the unity and peace that the Spirit has already wrought in Christ’s church, when you understand the Oneness of God: Father, Son, and Spirit, when you understand the oneness that we have in Christ as his body, when you understand the oneness of our hope and baptism and faith, then, beloved, you are ready to obey the Lord not out of duty of obligation, but out of evangelical obedience. This is the point of having the grounding come after the commands. When you find humility, gentleness, patience, and love difficult in the body, it is because you have forgotten the grounding! You are not caring about the seven “ones” that create oneness!

So hear the commands today and go from here behaving in humility and gentleness and patience and love towards one another, and do so knowing that you are already one in

Christ. Act as you are. It isn't easy. We are never promised it will be. 43 years it the longest a rock band, most of whom know Christ, have been able to go. Christ's church has gone nearly 2,000. That's objectively, in heaven. But our difference on earth why we have to continually be rooted in the doctrine of the truth.

We must realize that it is in this way that the Apostle is telling us that the triumph of God in Christ is being made known to the powers of heaven. And when we refuse to act as we are, we mock his victory. Become on earth as you are in heaven already. In this way, the powers in heavenly places will not be able to withstand the onslaught of the church against their kingdoms. They will see the wisdom of God in the kindness, humility, and unity of his people. They will cower in terror, for there is no force in the world as powerful as Christ's militant church taking up such weapons as these. Certainly not theirs. For they are full of cruel hate. But God's people must never be.

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