

## CREEDAL UNITY IN ONE SPIRIT: ONE LORD, ONE FAITH, ONE BAPTISM

**Summary of what we will learn:** Sadly and ironically there is no small amount of *controversy* over this section on *Church Unity*! We'll save the controversy for a bonus study and simply take Paul at his words written here. The Church in Ephesus, at risk of fracturing in Paul's absence with Timothy replacing the removed false-teachers, is admonished to walk humbly, meekly, and patiently *in love*. They will do this by focusing on the Creed that unites them *already*. In this they will grow because Christ is actively giving them GIFTS: the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Christ gives these gifts to serve His Church in the constant growth of spiritual maturity in One Body, whose Head is Christ.

**Ephesians 4:1-16** - I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge/*encourage* you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, <sup>2</sup> with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another *in love*, <sup>3</sup> eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; <sup>4</sup> ~~There is one~~ body and ~~one~~ Spirit—just as you were called to the ~~one~~ hope that belongs to your call— <sup>5</sup> ~~one~~ Lord, ~~one~~ faith, ~~one~~ baptism, <sup>6</sup> ~~one~~ God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

<sup>7</sup> *Now* grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of *the gift of Christ*.

<sup>8</sup> Therefore it says,

“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.”

<sup>9</sup> (In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? <sup>10</sup> He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) <sup>11</sup> And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the *pastors* and teachers, <sup>12</sup> ~~to equip the saints~~ *for bringing the saints to completion*, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup> until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, <sup>14</sup> so that we may no longer be *infants*, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. <sup>15</sup> Rather, speaking the truth *in love*, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the Head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every *ligament supplied joint with which it is equipped*, *in accord with [His] activity in apportioning each single part when each part is working properly*, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up *in love*.

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V.1 – I urge/*encourage* you to walk... Do you remember what “Walk” referred to in chapter 2?

V.2 – *humility, gentleness, with patience* – who do these describe?

– *bearing with one another in love* – whose love was the source of their strength/knowledge (ch. 3)?

V.3 – *eager to maintain The Unity of The Spirit* – is this unity something they possess already or is it a goal they're striving towards?

**Dr. Winger:** “The true unity of the Spirit is not a *goal* toward which the Ephesians aim, but a *gift* given for them to treasure, and the source of harmony with one another.”

– *in the bond of peace* – What kind of bond(age) is Paul talking about?

Vv. 4 – 6 form a poetic celebration of The Unity of The Spirit that is ours to treasure:

*One body and One Spirit* – “As man himself is composed of body and spirit, so the church is a living organism in which the body of Christ is quickened by the Spirit of Christ; if one were to be severed from the other, the church would die. This is a highly compressed version of 1 Cor 12:13, ‘for in one Spirit we all were baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we all were given to drink of one Spirit.’” (Dr. Winger)

*just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call* – the verb “you **were called**” is passive. Who called the Ephesians to the One hope? Do Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians have a different hope? A different Calling? A different Caller?

*One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism* – these three are all dealing with objective, absolute truth, **gifts** that the Ephesian Christians (and all Christians) have received and share in common. For this reason “Faith” in this instance refers to the uniform body of teaching (Doctrine) about the person & work of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, rather than how “faith” is used elsewhere to refer to *my* subjective, personal belief(s).

Why is Baptism mentioned and not the other Sacrament?

*one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all* – rounds out the Trinitarian poem

**Doctrinal Proof Text Alert!!** *Eph. 4:4-6 is one of those necessary verses for defining “The Church”*

**Minor Transition at 4:7** – not a separate section or topic, Paul shifts to the instruction concerning the ministers who serve in this One Holy Church, which is key to the peaceful, lifelong walk that Paul urges.

*grace was given to each one of us* – Remember: Unity is the theme of this chapter, not different graces

**Dr. Winger:** “The body of Christ is one because all her members hold in common the very same gifts of God (‘one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father,’ 4:5-6). In the ensuing verses Paul will appeal to further gifts of the ascended Lord that are likewise held in common, specifically the men in the office of the ministry given to the church.”

*according to the measure of the gift of Christ* – Christ IS the gift, so the measure is equal to His stature

**Dr. Winger:** “The gift is not in accord with what each person deserves but in accord with what Christ has to offer. For Christ is the ‘measure’ of what is given to us; ***we receive as much as he has merited.***”

V.8 – Paul *sort of* quotes Psalm 68:18 – What does Paul use Psalm 68:18 to say?

Vv. 9 – 10 – *Descended...Ascended...Fills all things* – The eternal Son of God became Man (incarnation). By His life, ministry, death, descent into hell, resurrection from the dead and ascension into heaven He conquers, taking Sin, Death, and Satan captive. Now He is seated on the heights of heaven, the throne of God, He has received all authority and enacts the Kingdom of Grace through the Ministry of His Church.

V. 11 – back to Ps. 68:18 “he gave gifts to men”, what gifts did the ascended Christ give to His Church?

*He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, pastors and teachers*

-The first three are **foundational** offices which do not continue in the Church beyond the apostolic era

-The second two are **ongoing** offices in the Church till Christ’s return

1. Apostles – “sent ones” such as an envoy, the foundational NT office bringing Christ’s Ministry forward
2. Prophets – probably not referring to OT prophets, but NT ones with direct revelation of the Holy Spirit
3. Evangelists –Philip (Acts 21:8) and others in a **transitional** role between apostles and pastors

+Who are four other *Evangelists* you hear of?

4. Pastors – a term used alongside *episkopos* (bishop, overseer) and *presbyter* (elder) in Acts 20:17

**Dr. Winger:** “As a Middle Eastern shepherd would lead from the front rather than driving the sheep from behind, calling out to the sheep who know his voice (Jn 10:3-4, 27), so pastors lead the church; but rather than diverse secular notions of leadership, the pastoral image suggests leading the flock to water, food, and safety. Their role is to speak Christ’s Word and give his cleansing and nourishing sacramental gifts.”

5. Teachers – In the Gospels it is only Jesus, a Greek term used for Rabbi. This teaching office is seen in Acts 13:1 at Antioch, in James 3:1, and in 1 Cor. 12:28-29. It can be hard to pin down as the other offices all have “teaching” as one of their traits, too.

**WHY-** for what three-fold purpose did Christ give this five-fold Office of the Ministry to His Church?

1.

2.

3.

Vv. 13-16 – What is **the aim** of this three-fold purpose of the Office of the Ministry? Paul says it best:  
*Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God,* **Credal Unity**

*to mature manhood,*

*to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,*

(Why?) <sup>14</sup> *so that we may no longer be infants,*

*tossed to and fro by the waves*

*and carried about by every wind of doctrine,*

*by human cunning,*

*by craftiness in deceitful schemes.*

<sup>15</sup> *Rather, speaking the truth **IN LOVE**, we are to grow up*

God’s Truth, God’s Love

*in every way into him who is the Head, into Christ,*

<sup>16</sup> *from whom the whole body,*

*joined and held together*

*by every ligament supplied*

supplied by whom? By God!

*in accord with [His] activity in apportioning each single part,*

*makes the body grow so that it builds itself up **IN LOVE***

**Dr. Stoeckhardt** - “Christians are not to remain babies in Christ, they are not to allow every wind of doctrine to carry them about – they are rather to become rooted and grounded so as to be able themselves to resist error...Genuine growth in Christian knowledge and truth does not consist in mere intellectual progress, but includes and is joined with a continued approach to and a more intimate union with Christ, in all things and in every way, in faith, godliness, and Christian firmness, so that our union with Christ, our Head and Lord, constantly becomes closer and more intimate.”

**Dr. Winger:** points out that **before God** we are to be as infants, receiving His care without any claim to our own merit or strength. **Before false teachers** we are to be rooted, grounded, and mature in The Faith and The Knowledge. “The work of the ministry, by giving God’s people growth and building them up in the body of Christ, is preparing them to stand firm against all foes (6:10-17).”

**Let's finish by talking about ... Love**

*Speaking the truth in love (v. 15)* – not just a way of speaking, but a way of believing, confessing, and acting. Most often in Ephesians the phrase “in love” refers to God’s love that first fills us then flows from us in words and deeds

**Dr. Winger:** “Paul will not permit truth and love to be pulled apart, as if love for others could countenance false teaching, or faithfulness to apostolic doctrine could exclude the love of God in which it is rooted. Truth and love do not soften or dilute each other; they are not competing forces to be kept in balance or traded off; divine love is the content of the true Gospel. Where both are from God, they exist in perfect harmony.”

*makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love (v. 16)* – Edification is love

**Dr. Winger:** “The body that is loved grows; the body that grows loves. ‘In love’ is therefore not a frivolous platitude at the end of this section, but a vigorous and intentional final word...It serves the same function as 1 Corinthians 13 in tying together the teachings on the body of Christ and its edification in the two surrounding chapters (Ephesians 3 and 5; 1 Corinthians 12 and 14). **Love and edification are indissoluble** (1 Cor 8:1).”