

“One”

Companion Paper to the Sermon Delivered by James Moriello on March 4th, 2018, at Firm Foundation Christian Church, Woonsocket, RI

“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:1-6).

Jesus Himself prayed, *“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me”* (John 17:20-23).

Some have taken these verses alone to justify ecumenism, which seeks the unity of all stripes of professing Christians. These folks do not understand that the unity which is enjoined by the Lord is limited to those who hold to *“the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints”* (Jude 3). In the same prayer quoted a moment ago, Jesus also prayed, *“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth”* (John 17:17). The same Paul who penned the words in Ephesians also calls God-fearing Bible believers to practice biblical separation, arguing, *“And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.” Therefore “Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.” “I will be a Father to you,*

And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty”” (2 Corinthians 6:16-18).

But others have moved too far to the other extreme, factioning themselves off from like-minded brethren. Can we not strive for the bond of peace, even amongst our own congregation in which God has placed us? Our text in Ephesians 4:4-6 presents a seven-fold oneness. We shall now take each *“one”* in turn.

1. *“One body.”* The church is the Body of Christ. In the early church, the tendency was to separate along ethnic lines, Jew and Gentile. In our culture, we tend to separate along lines of white, black, and Spanish. Worse still, the sons of Rehoboam, those youths who have decided that they can do church ‘better’ than their fathers, have done much to separate along generational lines, depriving themselves of experienced godly role models, and the church at large of a full measure of inter-generational unity (Cf. 1 Kings 12:6-14). Regarding salvation, all believers have equal access to God the Father through God the Son. *“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise”* (Galatians 3:29). This is true of salvation, but we all have different functions within the church, the Body of Christ. *“For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness”* (Romans 12:4-8).
2. *“One Spirit.”* This refers to God the Holy Spirit. *“But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.*

Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you” (Romans 8:9-11). All Christians are partakers of His blessings, and have access to the help of God the Holy Spirit when they ask for it.

3. *“One hope.”* All believers have the certain *“hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began”* (Titus 1:2). Therefore, we can have an exceedingly positive future, in spite of our present difficulties and trials. A curmudgeon Christian is an oxymoron. An utterly despairing Christian is out of God’s will. Ask Jesus, Paul, and Job if you don’t believe me.
4. *“One Lord.”* Friends, we are on the same team! Let us cease our petty complaints, and sacrifice our pride and jealousies for the sake of team success. I often wonder that the church room has less unity than the bar room! *“Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falls”* (Luke 11:17).
5. *“One faith.”* *““The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.” How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!” But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For*

Isaiah says, “LORD, who has believed our report?” So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:8-17). So we see that the impetus for faith is God’s Word, the effect of faith is belief unto righteousness, and the evidence of faith is confession unto salvation.

6. *“One Baptism.”* The reference here is not to water baptism, but to Holy Spirit baptism, which is something that is done by God the Son (Matthew 3:11). Holy Spirit baptism identifies us with and joins us to the Body of Christ. *“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit”* (1 Corinthians 12:13). Those who believe the gospel of Jesus Christ receive the fruit of Holy Spirit baptism, which is the guaranteed eternal inheritance. *“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory”* (Ephesians 1:13-14).
7. *“One God and Father of All.”* *“Therefore know this day, and consider it in your heart, that the LORD Himself is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other”* (Deuteronomy 4:39). *“And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God”* (1 Peter 1:17-21).