

“One Body”
Ephesians 4:1-6
(Preached at Trinity, November 23, 2014)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As I pointed out as we entered **Chapter 4**, while the first half of Ephesians is largely doctrinal the final chapters will be of a more practical nature. Paul passes from what we must *believe* to what we must *do*. Doctrine defines how we live.
 2. In **Verse 1** Paul admonishes us to walk worthy of our calling. Christians are called to a particular kind of life. The emphasis in the second half of **Ephesians** is the way our Christian calling transforms every aspect of our lives, particularly our relationships with one another.
 3. In **Verses 2-3** Paul stresses the Christian virtues that govern our interaction with others. He stresses humility, gentleness, patience, and tolerance and then adds:
"being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."
 4. Now as we continue in **Verses 4-6** Paul sets forth the foundations of our unity using a seven-fold expression of the word "One." Using these seven "ones" Paul sets before us the very foundation of our unity.
 - a. The number "one" is unique in that it paints a picture of unity. There is no division with the number one. There are no comparisons or contrasts with the number one. Where there are two or more you might have disunity, but not with one.
 - b. At the heart of Christianity is this oneness. There is "One body," "One Spirit," "One Hope," "One Lord," "One faith," "One baptism," and "One God."
 5. Paul arranges these groups of "ones" around the Trinity:
The first three belong to the Holy Spirit, the second three to Christ, the Son, and the final one to God the Father.
 6. Again, the word "one" carries the idea of "only." It reminds us that Christianity is unique and distinct. The NT describes it as a narrow way. In fact, there is "one" way.
Christianity is the only way to find eternal life. Jesus declared in **John 14:6**
"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."
 7. Christians share this one way together. We have been united to Christ. We share a very unique unity with one another. This morning I want us to begin looking at the foundations of this unity. The first thing Paul declares is that there is "One Body."
- I. Body is used as a metaphor of the church
Ephesians 1:22-23 NAU - "And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."
Ephesians 5:23 NAU - "For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body."

Colossians 1:18 NAU - "He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything."

Colossians 1:24 NAU - "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions."

- A. The church is the body of Christ
1. It describes oneness, cohesion
 2. It describes our mystical union with Christ – the church is an inseparable part of Christ.
 3. It describes all of the body parts finding their life in the Head. All of the body functions together, each part dependent upon the other.
Ephesians 4:25 NAU - " we are members of one another."
- B. We can see this as applying chiefly to the entirety of our Lord's body. We refer to this as the "Universal Church." There is but one body. There is but one church.
1. The church is comprised of all of God's elect. They were chosen before the world began
LBC – Chapter 26:1 – "The catholic or universal church, which (with respect to the internal work of the Spirit and truth of grace) may be called invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ, the Head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all."
 2. Jesus came to die for these particular people
Ephesians 5:25-27 NAU - "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, ²⁶ so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless."
 3. The body of Christ includes every believer for whom Christ died.
Ephesians 5:28-30 NAU - "So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; ²⁹ for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also *does* the church, ³⁰ because we are members of His body."
 - a. Christ is building His church. All of us are intimately united to Him. We all share in communion with Him.
 - b. Each of us have been added as stones of the building of which He is the chief cornerstone. We all share in this great household of faith.
- C. As the body of Christ we share a wonderful communion with one another.
1. We are one with brothers and sisters in Christ across the globe and in every age.
Our Lord's church is comprised of people from every kindred and every tongue. The church destroys racism. It destroys division and schism. There wasn't a Jewish church and a Gentile church. There is but one body.
 2. We must pray for one another and recognize the fellowship we have with one another. We must weep for our brothers and sister who are suffering throughout the world because of their witness of our Lord.

1 Corinthians 12:26-27 NAU - "And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if *one* member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. ²⁷ Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it."

3. Paul's words here apply to the universal church – the universal body of Christ. We have a particular union with one another. We are one.

Ephesians 4:4 NAU - "*There is one body*"

Romans 12:5 NAU - "we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."

II. I argue, however, that we have to apply this, at least in part, to the local church as well. Curtis Vaughn rightly said, "What is said of the church in this broad sense is in the main true of it also in its local manifestations."

- A. In many ways the local church is the antithesis of this unity of the body
 1. Rather than one there are many. And they are divided from the Universal body of Christ in many ways.
 2. Local churches are often divided along racial lines – there are black churches and there are white churches – man-made divisions
 3. Local churches are also divided along doctrinal lines – there are many denominations, each holding to particular doctrinal distinctive. Some of the mainline denominations have fallen into heresy as they argue over homosexuality and even the authority of Scripture
 4. Local churches are divided according to worship distinctives – there are contemporary and traditional forms of worship. There are differing views as to our authority for ordering our worship.
 5. It seems that every generation finds new distinctives upon which to focus their attention. One of the more recent is the family integrated movement. There are churches that identify themselves strictly with the FIC movement.
 6. All of this fosters division and competition among churches. It creates fragmentation and weakens the work of the Kingdom.
- B. In other ways, however, the local church is the fullest expression of unity. There is a unique unity among the brethren in the local church
 1. Each of us have been added to this local body – we are unique with each one occupying a particular part.
 2. The local church can be a wonderful place of love and unity. We are truly "one body." It is the place where unity is put into practice in wonderful ways.
 3. We covenant together to labor together to be God's people in all unity and love. We care for one another, watch over one another, pray for one another.
 4. The local church shares the same confession of faith. We are united in doctrine.

5. We labor together with a unity of purpose
We all labor together for the prosperity of *this* church.
Listen to our covenant:
"I promise, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together with this assembly in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, disciplines and doctrines; to attend its services"

- C. This sounds like the promotion of division and schism but it is not
1. The New Testament recognizes the distinct nature of the unity of local churches
 2. Believers are united together in the local church in a unique way. The Lord's Supper is one of the sweetest expressions of the unity of the body of Christ, but it is given as an ordinance of the local church.
 3. Each church submits to particular pastors who have particular care for this particular group of believers.
Hebrews 13:17 NAU - "Obey your leaders and submit *to them*, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you."
 4. Every church will conduct its ministry in particular ways
- D. But local churches are to function in communion with other churches as the body of Christ.

1. We must not be in competition with our sister churches or have a spirit of independence and of separation from our brethren. (This is often difficult when you have two or three churches within a mile or two of each other)
 - b. Our Confession expresses the importance of communion

Between Christians:

LBC 27:1 – "All saints that are united to Jesus Christ, their Head, by His Spirit, and faith, although they are not thereby made one person with Him, have fellowship in His graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory; and, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, in an orderly way, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man."

Between churches:

LBC 26:14 – "As each church, and all the members of it, are bound to pray continually for the good and prosperity of all the churches of Christ,²⁷ in all places, and upon all occasions to further it (every one within the bounds of their places and callings, in the exercise of their gifts and graces) so the churches, when planted by the providence of God, so as they may enjoy opportunity and advantage for it, ought to hold communion among themselves, for their peace, increase of love, and mutual edification."

- c. Every Christian should be connected to a particular local church—the church where Christ has added them. And each church should be connected with other churches of like faith and practice in a relationship of mutual accountability. Although we are autonomous we are also accountable.
 - d. We have a particular responsibility for the health and wellbeing of this church—that we have a responsibility for the spiritual wellbeing of the particular people of this church.
- E. The problem with many Christians today is they don't understand the importance of the local Church – This is our *practical* place of unity. The local church is the visible expression of the body of Christ.
 - 1. Few see the local church as essential to their Christian life.
 - a. Most see the church as an accessory.
 - b. They don't see themselves as being an important part of a local body.
 - 2. Most plan their lives and then tack on the church instead of seeing the importance of their place in the local body.
 - 3. Nancy Wilson gives this excellent advice to young single women: “You need to be in a healthy church, a church that faithfully proclaims the Word, and feeds and shepherds the people. Sometimes people view going to a solid church as just a lucky happenstance rather than the result of a deliberate search. If for some reason you are not in such a church, then you must make every effort to find one, even if it means relocating. In our culture today, Christians relocate for jobs, but seldom for a church. Actually, the church you are in is far more important than the job you have.”
- D. Do you understand the importance of your relationship with your church?
 - 1. As a Christian you are a part of the body of Christ. We are one, inseparable, united. But God has designed every believer to be a part of a local body.
 - 2. Paul says here there is one body. We are united to Christ and we are united to one another.
Romans 12:5 NAU - "so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."
 - 3. This finds its greatest expression in the context of the local church. We are a distinct group of people bound to one another as the body of Christ.
May we strive to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.