

“One Faith”  
Ephesians 4:1-6  
(Preached at Trinity, December 28, 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. Paul has been describing the unity of the Church of Christ. This is one of the wonderful themes of the New Testament.
  - A. Paul writes to the Galatians  
**Galatians 3:28 NAU** - "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."
  - B. Paul wrote of the unity of Jews and Gentiles in **Chapter 2**  
**Ephesians 2:13-16 NAU** - "But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup> For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, <sup>15</sup> by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace, <sup>16</sup> and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity."
2. Now Paul describes the great unity of the Church by using the word "one."  
**Ephesians 4:3-6 NAU** - "being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup> *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; <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."
3. This is the unity that we all share as Christians. We are charged to preserve it, to maintain it. Paul charges us in **Verse 3** to be "diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."  
He writes in **Romans 15:**  
**Romans 15:5-7 NAU** - "Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God."
4. In **Verses 4-5** Paul gives us seven "ones" to describe our unity:  
One body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God.
5. So far we've looked at the first four – One body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord  
This morning I want us to look at the fifth – One Faith.
6. As we examine this unity we immediately find disagreement among the various writers of commentaries. There are two ways we can look at the word "faith" in **Verse 5** – either subjective or objective.

- A. By subjective we see the word as referring to the Christian experience of faith. It refers to the faith in Christ shared by all believers—the lively trust in the perfect work of Christ.
- B. By objective we see the word as referring to the system of beliefs that define Christianity—sometimes preceded by the article “the” – The Faith. Those who object to this line of interpretation claim that the use of the word faith as pertaining to a body of belief is unknown to the NT or at least very rare. I hold that we find faith used this way in many passages.

**Acts 6:7 NAU** - "The word of God kept in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith."

**Galatians 1:23-24 NAU** - "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy." <sup>24</sup> And they were glorifying God because of me."

**1 Timothy 3:8-9 NAU** - "Deacons likewise *must be* men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, <sup>9</sup> *but* holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience."

**1 Timothy 4:1 NAU** - "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons"

**1 Timothy 4:6 NAU** - "In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, *constantly* nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following."

**1 Timothy 5:8 NAU** - "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."

**1 Timothy 6:10 NAU** - "For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."

**Jude 1:3 NAU** - "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."

We can also apply an objective meaning in **Verse 13**.

**Ephesians 4:13 NAU** - "until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ."

8. Charles Hodge: “As this interpretation is in accordance with the general usage of language, and as there are so many cases in which the objective sense of the word is best suited to the context, there seems to be no sufficient reason for refusing to admit it.”
9. There are times when the word can be used interchangeably—either subjectively or objectively.

**2 Corinthians 13:5 NAS** - "Test yourselves *to see* if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you-- unless indeed you fail the test?"

I think this is true of both **Verse 5** and **Verse 13**. This is the way I will handle the verse this morning. The reality is that saving faith has substance. Our faith rests upon objective realities.

- I. First of all, let's look at it subjectively – as referring to saving faith. This faith is the common experience of every Christian—every *believer*.
- A. The Bible declares the guilt and condemnation of every human being. God demands perfect obedience to His Law and we have not obeyed.  
**James 2:10 NAU** - "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all."  
 1. The Law makes demands but provides no power to meet the demands  
 2. How shall the Law's demands ever be fulfilled?  
 Jesus came and fulfilled all of the requirements of the Law. He obeyed it perfectly.  
**Hebrews 4:15 NAU** - "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin."
- B. Two important things happened at the cross  
 1. Our sins were placed upon Christ—He bore our sins.  
**Isaiah 53:4-6 NAU** - "Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. <sup>6</sup> All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him."  
**1 Peter 2:24 NAU** - "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed."  
 2. His righteousness was placed upon us – We use the word imputation  
 a. Jesus lived a perfect spotless life. He met all the demands of the Law. His perfect righteousness was imputed to us – double imputation: Our sins to Him, His righteousness to us.  
 b. Imputed righteousness has been described as an accounting term. That which belongs to someone is placed to the account of another.  
 3. God the righteous Judge has condemned us because we have broken His Law.  
 a. We have been tried by the law and have been found guilty.  
 b. God has justified us on the basis of the righteousness of another. The righteousness of Christ has been imputed to us thus in a legal sense we are considered not guilty.  
 c. We call this forensic justification. Before God's throne of justice we have been declared "not guilty."
- C. How do we receive such a blessing of grace? How does it become ours? It must be received by faith alone  
**Galatians 2:16 NAU** - "knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus"  
 1. We must trust in the righteousness of Christ alone  
 2. You must humble yourself before Christ as a guilty sinner with nothing to offer and trust Him alone.

- 3 It isn't the faith that saves us. Faith is merely the instrument through which we lay hold on God's righteousness in Christ.
- 4 By believing in Christ His righteousness is imputed to us
- D. This is the ONLY way of salvation – there is no other way. There is ONE faith.
1. This is the essence of unity. Every Christian shares in this common experience of faith. If you haven't trusted Jesus you are not a Christian. Christians are rightly referred to as "Believers."
  2. There is something that characterizes this one faith—there is something particular to it. If it isn't true of your faith you don't share in this one faith of Christianity.
  3. True faith is never barren but always produces obedience to the commands of God.
  4. Obedience is at the very heart of the faith of Christianity.  
**Hebrews 11:8 NAS** - "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going."
  5. We are justified by faith alone but saving faith is never alone  
 Genuine faith is always an active faith, it has life, vitality
  6. Obedience is the result of hearing and then placing significance upon what you have heard.
    - a. People sin against God because they place little significance upon Him and His Law.
    - b. When God saves us He enables us to hear and He gives us a heart to obey – we see the significance of God. We see Him as having the right to rule us and that He is worthy of our obedience.
    - c. We are changed – This one faith produces a radical transformation.  
**2 Corinthians 5:17** – "Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."
    - d. Spurgeon – "If the professed convert distinctly and deliberately declares that he knows the Lord's will but does not intend to do it, you are not to pamper his presumption, but it is your duty to assure him that he is not saved. Do not suppose that the Gospel is magnified or God glorified by going to the worldlings and telling them that they may be saved at this moment by simply accepting Christ as their Saviour, while they are wedded to their idols, and their hearts are still in love with sin. If I do so I tell them a lie, pervert the Gospel, insult Christ, and turn the grace of God into lasciviousness."

- II. Let me touch on the other aspect of this one faith. It really isn't separate from it but intimately connected to it.
- A. Saving faith has substance – it is intimately connected to the Gospel
1. Faith demands some degree of knowledge
  2. Christianity is fixed upon a body of truth.
  3. You don't have to be a theologian to be saved but there are certain truths that cannot be separated from the Gospel that commands belief.
    - a. You have to understand sin and condemnation – the Gospel has no meaning without it.
    - b. You have to understand the cross of Christ. This was the substance of Paul's preaching and must be central to all preaching.  
**1 Corinthians 2:2 NAU** - "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."
    - c. You have to understand the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ  
**1 Corinthians 15:1-4 NAU** - "Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, <sup>2</sup> by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. <sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,"
    - d. You have to understand Jesus' right to rule over you. His Lordship is the essence of genuine repentance.  
**Romans 10:9 NAU** - "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"
  4. To deny the right of Jesus to rule over you is to deny the faith. It is to deny the substance of the Gospel.
- III. "The faith" also refers to the doctrines upon which the church stands.  
(We'll see this more in **Verse 13**)
- A. One of the key sources of unity for the church is doctrine
1. The early church was founded upon the Apostles doctrine  
**Acts 2:41-42 KJV** – "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."
  2. The Apostles' Doctrine was God's revelation of truth  
This was their source of unity – they were united upon these essential doctrines referred to as the Apostles Doctrine.
- B. Christianity cannot be separated from Doctrine
1. Doctrine defines God, it defines man, it defines redemption, it establishes God's standard for living
  2. Doctrine unites us – we believe the same things

3. True doctrine builds and edifies the body of Christ  
This is the work of the ministry – **See Eph. 4:11-16**
4. The doctrine of the Church is the Word of God. It is the source of our growth  
**1 Peter 2:2 NAU** - "like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation"  
Speaking to the Ephesian elders:  
**Acts 20:32 NAU** - "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build *you* up and to give *you* the inheritance among all those who are sanctified."
5. This unity of doctrine is so important that Paul commanded the church to depart from any who cause division by teaching contrary doctrines  
**Romans 16:17 NAU** - "Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them."

#### Conclusion:

1. We are united by the “one faith.” We share the same belief in Christ. We rest in Him alone.
2. But our belief rests upon truth.
  - a. The gospel message is simple - but it is also precise
  - b. The Christian gospel is not just a feeling or experience – it demands truth
3. This faith unites us.  
There are not many ways to be saved. There is but one way.  
We share one faith that looks to the one Lord.  
True unity demands that we have the same faith both objectively and subjectively, both outwardly as we look to the one Gospel message, and inwardly as we embrace it as the only way of salvation.  
In this all of the true people of God are united – All of us embrace the Scriptures and all of us subject ourselves to its teachings.
4. And this is how you can become united to Christ and to the people of God—by faith and faith alone.