

Jason Upchurch - Ephesians 4:4-8 - Why Should We Be Unified? - Part 1

If you've been a Christian for any length of time you know that unity among Christians is difficult. It's not easy. Someone once said that the definition of conflict is two people who live in the same country. And that's probably not too far from the truth.

The reality is that not only are we sinners, but even beyond sin we just have different preferences, backgrounds, lifestyles and things we consider acceptable and good and right. And so coming together is often difficult.

We've seen the marvelous truth throughout Ephesians that God has brought Jew and Gentile together in one new man. He's destroyed the dividing wall of hostility between Jews and Gentiles.

All people - regardless of their background - are the people of God, the true Israel, true Jews. And those outside the faith are Gentile pagans. He's brought peace to those who are far off and those who are near.

That's all well and good theologically. But how does that actually work out when you're sitting in church with people who are very different from you?

Different views on family, school, spiritual gifts, what's acceptable to do on the Lord's Day? Differences politically, how we spend our time and money.

A few weeks ago we did church in the park. And church in the park is hard on a few levels. It's hard because we've got 7 churches getting together who don't normally get together. What songs are we singing? How many times are we repeating this chorus? Who's preaching? I can't get my communion cup open and once I do it's ultra pasteurized grape juice and styrofoam wafer. Where's the wine? It's hard because we all like what we like. We're used to our church.

It's doubly hard because it's where we bump into many people we know who used to worship with us. Or we worshipped with them. And now we don't. It's like seeing your ex girlfriend at your high school reunion. You're nice and cordial but it's awkward and we all know it.

We're different. I remember being in Israel and someone was like "Hey, our tour guide is a smoker. Do you think he's actually a Christian?" I said I'm hard pressed to find a verse that says putting leaves in your mouth and setting them on fire is a sin. "But it's the addiction and the health, our body is a temple." Brother, I think you might be addicted to brownies and you could shave off 45 pounds and no one would think you're wasting away. I'm not advocating for smoking - I think it's dumb - but I think there's some liberty here.

It's hard to live together. And that can be true even in our own congregation. Sometimes things are tough between believers. There's tension and preferences and people rub each other the wrong way. Sometimes it's sin, but it's not always.

And we read that we're one new man. But sometimes that doesn't help. So what truths do we ground ourselves in to help us understand that we are one? We saw a couple weeks ago how we should walk. How we should behave. We are to walk in a manner worthy of our calling: humility, gentle, patience, love, eager to maintain unity.

Eager - excited - to maintain unity and peace. How do we stay eager or earnest? Well Paul tells us there are some truths we have to cling to in order to be unified. There are 7 truths actually - we're only going to get to the first 2 this morning.

1. There is One Body. **Read 4**

The first truth we learn here is that when God saved you, he brought you into the body of Christ. There are many illustrations to describe the people of God throughout the millennia: bride, family, house, temple. But one that is often used in the NT is that we're a body. So the human body becomes an illustration for our being part of the people of God.

Rom 12:4-5: For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

Col 3:15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts to which indeed you were called in one body.

When you were called into the Kingdom you were called into a body. There is no such thing as a Lone Ranger Christian. There's no going it alone in the Kingdom.

I meet people on a regular basis who claim to be Christian but can't bring themselves to be part of any church for one reason or another. They think their theology is so pure they can't possibly exist with anyone else, with any other body. That idea is entirely foreign to the Bible.

People do come into the Kingdom one by one. We come individually through faith alone in the crucified and risen Jesus alone. But when we come, we come into a group. We come into a body where we are now an important part.

And when thinking about unity amongst Christians I think the analogy of a body is super helpful. **Turn to 1 Cor. 12:12-3.**

As you're turning there, know that Paul is talking primarily about spiritual gifts in this chapter. In many ways the Corinthian church was super blessed with an abundance of what we would call miraculous gifts: speaking in tongues, miracles, healings, so on. And there was a sense in which some people might feel left out because they didn't have the "cool" gifts and other people might feel proud because they did have those gifts.

Paul seeks to correct both of those issues here by using the same analogy of a body. And although we're not talking about spiritual gifts specifically, all the same principles apply to us. **Read 12-13**

So when you were saved the Holy Spirit baptized you into one body. You were saved and plunged into a body. You were grafted in. We're all like Frankenstein's monster. The moment we're saved we are joined into the body.

And we're all different. And that's on purpose. That's not a bug, that's a feature. I we really need to think that way. Jew, Greek, slave, free, Calvinist, Arminian, old earth, young earth. By God's grace we worship in this building that was a Methodist church. Probably none of us would ever go to a Methodist church - Arminian, charismatic, somewhat legalistic but with women pastors. Crazy. But there's going to be a lot of Methodists in heaven because they're part of the body.

God did that on purpose.

And Paul addresses 2 problems here that are often seen among Christians. One is self-pity. "Well I'm not as good as so and so, so what good am I?" That's pride. Self pity is just pride reversed. Pride usually comes by people thinking they're so great. But there's also a pride of whining about how not good we are. **Read 14-20**

So you see Paul's point. If you're an eye you can't look at ears and think you're no good. That's what a lot of people do. They look at others, think they are better. And throw a pity party.

"I can't play music, I can't teach, I can't, I can't I can't so I'm no good I'm probably not even part of the body." Paul says knock that off.

The point of the body analogy is unity and diversity. Unity because the whole body is one. Diversity because we all do different stuff. If you were like that guy, who would do your job? If you were like this other guy, who would do your job?

We don't need 10 ears. We need 2. But we do need 10 fingers.

We don't need 2 noses, we need 1. But we do need 2 eyes.

This is how it is in the body of Christ. By the way, who made you the way you are with the gifts you have? God. **Read 18**

God arranged you in this body. He gave you the gifts you have, he has given you the abilities and opportunities you have.

And you could complain that you're not something else. But let me ask you: are you actually being fully faithful with what he has given you?

Are you the best ear? The best eye? The best nose? The best knee cap?

You want more kids, great. Are you being faithful with the little ones already around you?

You want more opportunities to counsel others. Great. Are you doing everything you can right now? You want opportunities to teach? Are you teaching your family and teaching your friends right now?

He who is faithful with little is faithful with what? Much.

The reason the body is so important is to remember that the parts serve one another. Are you striving to serve and work for others?

The other issue Paul addresses is pride. "I'm better than these other people." **Read 21-26**

If you're part of the body you can't despise other parts of the body. It would be really weird if my hand had a problem with my ear and kept slapping it.

When my kids get hurt - scrape their leg or cut their hand - and they're crying I'll often ask them as joke "Should we amputate?" Just cut it off? By the way, that never works. They never think it's funny when there's even one drop of blood.

The answer is always no. Why? Because we need those parts. Even if they're hurting, even if they're causing the rest of us pain and discomfort. We don't just chop stuff off.

When you think of other people in the body of Christ you should have the same reaction. "Okay, they're causing me pain, I don't really like them but I don't get to amputate. I don't get to chop off my nose because it keeps dripping. I don't get to cop off my foot because I stubbed my toe." Why? Because it's part of the body.

Even the unpresentable parts. Those are the parts we cover up with underwear. These are the people in the congregation who don't really seem to have any obvious great gift. They don't seem to be a massive benefit. Maybe we even feel like we've got to spend a lot of time covering them up. We don't get to chop them off either. In fact, how does Paul say we treat them in **Vs. 23? Read**

We treat them with greater honor. Why do we do that? Again, because God puts all the parts in the church on purpose. **Read 25**

God did this on purpose. Every one of you sitting here are here on purpose. God has placed every single one of you not just in the body of RBC, but in the body of Christ. Jesus is our head - he leads us - and we are called to serve each other with the gifts he's given us.

There's only one body. There are no alternate bodies. I've had some very difficult interactions with other members of the body over the years. And you probably have too. How do we get past that? How do we move on from tough things?

Well, either they are not Christian in which case we can have compassion on them because they are hell bound and just doing what their father the devil is calling them to do.

Or they are part of the body of Christ because God has made them part of the body. And they are therefore indispensable and we should do everything we can to have no division in the body.

As we turn back to Ephesians, this is the biggest thing to maintain unity: remember there is just one body of Christ.

2. One Spirit. Read 4a

So there is one Spirit - talking about the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the logical next person in the list because he is the one who placed us into the body.

Of all the members of the Trinity I think most people would agree that the Holy Spirit is least talked about and he is probably the least understood.

The Bible teaches that there is only one God. Not 2 or 3 or millions. Just 1. But that the eternal God has always and forever existed in 3 persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father, Son and Spirit are co-equal in all ways concerning their deity.

They have different roles within the Godhead, and Jesus the Son also has a human nature, but when we consider who each person is as God, they are all co-equal.

All 3 are omniscient - all knowing. All 3 are omnipotent - all powerful. All 3 are glorious, holy, good, eternal, and worthy of praise and honor. We should praise the Holy Spirit and worship the Holy Spirit like we worship the Son and the Father. He is the third person of the Trinity, fully divine.

And for believers, he is probably the member of the Trinity who is most intimately connected with our lives. And although it hasn't been the major theme of the book, the Holy Spirit has been talked about a lot already in the book of Ephesians.

And I think we forget or overlook just how important the Holy Spirit is to our very life. And really how important the Spirit is to the collective unity of the Church. Because what the Holy Spirit has done isn't just save us, but brought us into a family. And we see that in many ways throughout Scripture.

Look back at 1:13-14 We learn in other places that the Spirit is actually the one who regenerates believers. He's the one who brings you from spiritual death to spiritual life. But the moment that happens, we are then sealed by him specifically. He is our stamp from God that we are God's. When we show in heaven and stand before the judgement the way we're getting in is because we're stamped with the Holy Spirit. **Read 13-14**

When someone dies everyone who is an heir is contacted for the reading of the will. And many times there's a verification process that you are in fact an heir. Sometimes it's just showing a drivers license. But something shows others that you are legitimately entitled to receive a blessing as part of the family.

What's the verification that we're part of the family, part of the list of heirs? The Holy Spirit. He is the proof that we are part of the family of God.

He's also our source of wisdom. **Read 16-18**

When you grow in your understanding of the Word and the promises of God. When you are sanctified in your mind it's not because of your own intelligence. It's because the Holy Spirit has given you wisdom and revelation. We call this the doctrine of illumination. It's the Spirit who makes the Word come alive in your life.

He does that for you and for me and for every Christian. Every Christian who grows in the grace and knowledge of Jesus does so through the work of the Holy Spirit. There's no alternate way of sanctification.

We read the Bible, which was produced by the Spirit.

We fellowship with other believers, who are filled with the Spirit.

We sing songs praising God, being filled with the Spirit.

We pray to God in the Spirit.

So are you more like Jesus now that a year ago? Praise the Spirit!

Did you overcome some long time sin? Praise the Spirit.

Are you more loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful? Praise the Spirit because those are the fruit of who? The Spirit.

The Spirit continually illuminates us to the glories of God through his Word and creation and saints who are filled with the very same Spirit.

The Spirit also allows us to come to the Father. **Read 2:17-18**

So Jesus came, preached the gospel to all. And now we can all come - Jew and Gentile - to the Father.

At Bible camp all the staff wear badges. And there's different color badges with names and pictures. And I didn't really know what the different colors meant but they all signify something and levels of authority.

Well in the Kingdom there's 1 badge type and there's only one name on the badge. The proverbial badge to get to the Father is the Spirit and the name on the badge is Jesus. Everyone in the Kingdom comes to the Father the exact same way: through the Spirit in the name of Jesus.

John 14:6: I am the way, the truth, the life, no one comes to the Father but through me.

And it's same access pass that every believer has. My access to God is no greater than yours. Your little guy who loves the gospel and follows Jesus Christ crucified for his sins and is young in faith has the same access as the oldest saint at RBC. We all have the same Holy Spirit badge with Jesus's name on the front so we all get to the Father.

The Spirit makes us part of the same temple. **Read 2:22**

Paul says we're being built into a Temple together by the Spirit.

There's a sense in which each of our own bodies is a Temple to the Lord. God dwells in his people now so our bodies should be holy to the Lord. That means we don't sin with our bodies and our bodies should represent God with excellence.

I found out last week that the Mormons are putting in a Temple in CDA in a couple years. I was asked if I wanted a VIP tour of the facility before it opens. And I don't think I'm going to go - it's a pagan temple after all. But I will say the Mormons spare no expense to make their temples amazing and excellent in every possible way. You drive by one and you think: wow, that's impressive.

It's a little humbling that the pagans do things with more excellence than we do. But we don't have a physical building for a temple, we are the Temple.

That's how people should think of our bodies individually - we're pure and holy and taking as good of care of ourselves as possible. But also how we should be as the body of Christ which is the dwelling place of God the Holy Spirit.

We don't want God to live in the slums. We don't want our God dwelling squalor. We want our God to dwell in the middle of people who are unified and loving and kind.

One more verse on the one Spirit. **Turn to Eph 5:18. Read 18-21**

This is an interesting verse because it contrasts the effects of alcohol to the effects of the Spirit. **Read**

This verse is often used by charismatics to be drunk on the Spirit and they advocate all kinds of crazy things with it. But that's not what Paul is talking about. The Spirit gives us self-control, not wild shaking experiences.

The point is that just like alcohol affects who we are and what we say, so does the Spirit. And so we should be filled with the Spirit. How do we do that? Is it some mystical experience? No. **Look at Col. 3:16-17**

Paul says almost the same thing, but he says something other than being filled with the Spirit. **Read 16-17**

Instead of saying be filled with the Spirit he says let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly. These are synonyms in Paul's mind. If you want to be filled with the Spirit, the Word of Christ will dwell in you richly. If the Word of Christ dwells in you richly, you will be filled with the Spirit.

This is true with all people.

What we need to understand is that our unity is based on the work of the Spirit. The same Holy Spirit at work in you is at work in the person next to you. And He's at work in the brothers at the Vine and the brothers in Clayton and the brothers in Africa and Europe and Asia.

Over the last 100 years there's always a lot of talk about a personal relationship with Jesus. And there's truth in that, of course. You personally need to repent from your sins and you personally need to believe that Jesus is Lord and that God raised him from the dead in. Order to be saved.

But one thing I think is often missed when presenting the gospel to people is the public relationship of Jesus through the work of the Spirit in the local church.

The one Spirit brought you in to the Kingdom like he brought everyone else.

The one Spirit has gifted you to minister to all the members of the body of Jesus.

The one Spirit wants you to be filled with his Word so you can encourage other Spirit filled believers.

The one Spirit doesn't want to be grieved by our disobedience, he wants you to grow up into his Temple together with other believers to the glory of God.

Pray

Benediction Numbers 6:24-26