

- Over the past couple of weeks in our Daily Bible Reading we have been working through Paul's letters to the Galatians and the Ephesians. One of the great rewards of consistent Bible reading through a particular text is that you begin to see trains of thought throughout the text. For example, in Galatians we see a heavy emphasis on Paul and his legitimacy in chapters 1 and 2, and then we see the next 4 chapters centering around the contrasts between flesh/law and the faith that these Galatians had been taught and that they were trying to turn away from. Reading that whole letter over the course a week and for me color marking the text has really helped me to see Paul's thought process as he wrote that letter guided by the Holy Spirit.
- The same thing takes place in Ephesians. The first half, 3 chapters are focused on a lot of deep theological teachings of Paul concerning God's grace and what it has done for us. The second half of the letter teaches us how to respond to God's grace. God has extended grace to us and that's wonderful and fantastic, but that's not the end of the story. God expects us to live a certain way because of that grace, and the very first thing we see in **4:1-6** is this idea of being one. Paul puts a major emphasis here on being one, why it matters, how we can get to that point, and what it is based upon. I want to study that together with you this morning in hope that we will see just why unity is important and why we should be striving for it.

### I. Unity is needed in God's Kingdom. (v.1)

- A. Paul recognized the need for unity by "imploring" the Ephesians to "diligently" work towards having the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
- B. Any group that opposes itself cannot be successful.
  1. Jesus recognized that a house divided cannot stand. (**Matt. 12:25**)
  2. This whole discussion came about because Jesus had been accused of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebul. (**Matt. 12:22-26**) The accusation was foolish because that would be counterproductive.
  3. Any goal is hard to accomplish when those involved are not united on how that goal can be accomplished. People are pulled in different directions and eventually people recognize that they are going nowhere unless they come to an agreement on how to proceed.
- C. Jesus knew that the success of His Kingdom would be dependent upon unity among His followers.
  1. Jesus prayed, fervently, that His followers would be united in cause and action just like Jesus and the Father were unified in their purpose of sending Jesus to the earth. (**John 17:20-23**)
  2. Without the unity of those professing Christ, Christianity becomes discombobulated and you get what we have today with the thousands of Christian denominations.
  3. One of the unbelievers loudest arguments against Christianity is the existence of so many denominations. They would say that the fact that "Christians" can't even come to an agreement on what they believe must mean that this isn't something that is truly from God.
  4. Denominationalism is not part of God's plan for the church. There is no way that it can be acceptable for groups to both be right and productive for the kingdom while completely opposing one another in their beliefs.
  5. In the earliest days of the church, Paul is already having to rebuke the Christians in Corinth for beginning to divide amongst themselves. (**I Cor. 1:10-16**)
  6. Denominationalism and disunity are counterproductive to the cause of God's Kingdom. We must understand the necessity unity and seek to find the way that we can achieve unity as Jesus prayed for.

### II. Unity can be achieved by having the right attitude. (vv.2,3)

- A. There are some attitudes that we can have that just will not help to accomplish unity.
  1. *An arrogant and bullyish attitude:* "We must do things my way because it is my way. If you don't like it then you can go somewhere else."
  2. *A harsh attitude:* "If you don't see things my way then you are just a fool, and I probably don't need you around anyways."
  3. *An impatient attitude:* "Why is this so hard for you to see? You should be understanding the same way I do by now."
  4. *An unloving attitude:* "I honestly couldn't care less about what you think or how you feel on the matter because I'm just concerned about things going my way."
  5. *A lazy attitude:* "Meh... it doesn't really matter if we come to unity or not. If it happens it happens, but I'm just not going to concern myself with it too much and really go out of my way to help it be accomplished."

- B. On the other side, Paul gives us some attitude qualities that we should have if we are striving to be unified.
1. *Humility*: Having a mindset of humility is key. We must be willing to consider the fact that our way of seeing things might not be correct, and that ultimately Christ calls the shots in what we do within the Church and that much of it is not left up to us. We must be willing to concede at times that our way of doing things isn't the best way they can be done. We also must remember that we are nothing without Christ. We must not think that we know better than everyone else. When humility is present in decision making and discussions then it is much easier to come to a common understanding and unity.
  2. *Gentleness*: The way we treat others can go a long way in helping to come to an understanding of peace and unity. There will be times when we disagree. There will be times when others are not in line with Scripture. The way that we approach those discussions will go a long way in helping us to either become unified, or continue to be at odds with one another.
  3. *Patience/tolerance*: We must recognize that we are dealing with people and when dealing with people, mistakes will be made. We must be patient with one another recognizing that maturity and spiritual understanding don't come to us all the same. We must be tolerant when others have different ideas in matters of opinion. When we are patient and tolerant then we can come to unity must sooner.
  4. *Diligence*: Paul and Jesus recognized the need for unity and we must do the same. In recognizing this we must put forth as much effort as possible to be unified. This might mean putting in long hours of study. It might mean some long days in discussion. But that effort will be completely worth it once we are unified together and we begin to accomplish great things for the Lord and the Kingdom.
  5. *Loving*: Love must be at the heart of us all. We must have a love for one another just as Jesus and the Father loved us enough to send Jesus to begin with. If love is abounding in our hearts then being able to have these other qualities will come much more easily because love ties all of these other qualities together.

### III. Unity must be built on the same foundation. (vv.4-6)

- A. A common beginning point is needed in order to come to a common understanding of unity.
1. Austin, Allison, and I have been studying with a couple of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of LDS for the past couple months. They are very zealous for God, and they are just great folks.
  2. However, we are having problems coming to a unity of understanding because we are coming from two different starting points. We are approaching the understanding of our faith simply from the Bible, while they are coming not just from the Bible, but also from the Book of Mormon, the Pearl of Great Price, Doctrine and Covenants and then continuing modern revelation on top of that.
  3. We will never come to a common understanding and be unified as long as our basis/foundation of faith are different.
- B. Under the umbrella of Christianity, there can only be true unity if all are willing to come to a common belief and understanding concerning the facts that Paul lays forth in these verses. Paul lays down 7 fundamental and foundational beliefs that all Christians should agree upon.
1. There is one body.
    - a) There are not churches/denominations. There is one church that Christ died for. **(Matt. 16:18)**
    - b) Christ's body is not divided and He is not the head of multiple bodies. **(Eph. 5:23)**
  2. There is one Spirit.
    - a) There is one Holy Spirit of God that Jesus promised to His Apostles. **(John 16:13-15)**
    - b) There is one Holy Spirit of whom Peter said believers would receive His gift upon obedience to the Gospel. **(Acts 2:38)**
  3. There is one hope of your calling.
    - a) We are called through the resurrection of Christ to the hope that we might be raised as well. **(I Cor. 15)**
    - b) Through faith in this resurrection we have hope of eternal life. **(Tit. 1:2)**
  4. There is one Lord.
    - a) Jesus is our one Lord through whom are all things. **(I Cor. 8:5,6)**
    - b) Jesus is the one that the Father made "Lord and Christ." **(Acts 2:36)**
  5. There is one faith.
    - a) There is one faith that has once for all been delivered as Jude writes in **Jude 3**.
    - b) That one faith has been given to us and can be established through the New Testament.
  6. There is one baptism.
    - a) There is only one baptism that has been commanded and that is water baptism through faith in Jesus Christ. **(Acts 8:37,38)**
    - b) Only through this one baptism can a person have their sins forgiven. **(Acts 2:38)**
  7. There is one God and Father of all.
    - a) There is one God who has always been. **(Gen. 1:1)**
    - b) He is the Father of all and He is above all things.

Is unity important to God? You better believe it! God knows that the best work is done by those who are united in cause and spirit and that should be us. We need to recognize the importance of unity and give every effort we can to come to unity with believers so that we can have the influence in this world that we should. May God help us to be unified in Him and strive to show others the better way of Christ.