

STORY:

THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

Ephesians 4: 1-6

Introduction:

1. We have always been a people who pleaded for unity.
2. Yet, 150 years of restoration history in America show us to be a divided fragmented people! Why?
3. Could it be that we need to re-think something.
 - a. Could we be expecting the wrong kind of unity?
 - b. Could we be expecting it in the wrong way?

Discussion:

I. THE TRUTH IS SOMETIMES BETWEEN EXTREMES.

A. On the One Hand - Some Say, "Love is the only norm".

1. This is appealing.

2. But, unity without the doctrine of Christ is not Christian unity ("the unity of the Spirit").

B. On the Other Hand - Some Say There Must Be Total Doctrinal Agreement On Every Point -- Without This There Cannot Be Fellowship.

1. This, too, is comfortably appealing.

2. But, it is unworkable.

a. 150 years of history show this.

b. we come to the Bible with different back-grounds and prejudices, etc.

3. Even the New Testament church didn't have total agreement on all matters.* -- (Rom. 14:1-12, see the church at Corinth; see Paul & Barnabas & Peter).

*Paul said, "forbearing one another in love".
Ephesians 4:21. There is nothing to "forbear" if everyone sees eye to eye.

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Howeshy Story:

"WE CANNOT ALL

Understand the Bible alike.

- UNRELIGIOUS

- UNWORKABLE

Excuses
1. "Sound Doctrine"
2. Not "Spiritual"
3. Not "Evangelistic"
4. Not "Loving"
etc.

- C. It Seems To Me That Ephesians 4: 1-6 Declares A Third Possible Ground For Unity. - 2:11-22

"E- one solid rock" (see above notes)

"WALK WORTHY" - Do

II. PAUL'S FORMULA: EPHESIANS 4: 1-6:

U.S. Debates it. we agree by co-operating with the

- A. First, He Urges That Their Personal Attitudes Affect Unity - v: 1-3.

1. Doctrine is important (see later on) and there can be no unity without it.
2. But, their love is primary.
 - a. "lowliness" - (humility - willing to hear and learn from another. not defensive because of pride).
 - b. "meekness" - acknowledging our own helplessness and God's greatness. (Barclay: "the man, on the tiller of whose life, is the hand of God.")
 - c. "longsuffering" - (patience - μακροθυμα) (like the big dog ignoring the yapping of the little dog).
 - d. "forbearing" - (tolerating, even accepting each other) -- which is not necessary if we have full agreement.
 - e. "in love" - (given by God) Romans 5:5. doesn't need definitions, rather needs doing.

NOTE:

3. There can be no unity and harmony except people love each other. We must be one on the doctrinal basics, but even agreement will not make us one unless we love each other. So, in the final analysis, brethren are made one by love.

- B. Second, There Are Some Basics On Which We Must Be One.

ABSOLUTES (Building Blocks)

1. We cannot expect to agree on every periphery issue. To force this is to fragment ourselves.
 - a. Paul said "avoid foolish questions" (II Tim. 2: 23-25; I Tim. 6:4,5).
 - b. Earl McMillan "turtles" all the way down".
2. But, there are basic doctrines without which there can be no unity in Christ. (Ephesians 4: 4-6 has some "solid rock" issues at the bottom of "the turtles".

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C. The Platform On Which We Stand To Love Each Other:
Ephesians 4: 4-6.

WHICH denomination? (not "the only one" but "the only")

1. "One Body" - the church, not a sect, but made up of all who have claimed Jesus as Saviour, being baptized into Him for the remission of sins, and accept Him as Lord of life.
2. "One Spirit" - the third personality of the Godhead. He lives in the church (I Cor. 3:16) and in each Christian (I Cor. 6:19,20). Since we all have the same "life source" (Eph. 3:16) we should keep "the unity of the Spirit". (Eph. 4: 1,2).
3. "One Hope" - *"we win" (One? Post? A? hell no)*
 - a. we all hope for the redemption of the world, the victory of Jesus, and the arrival in heaven.
 - b. "hope" for the christian is not "I'd hope it doesn't rain, but it probably will" - but it is confident assurance, solid expectation. II Tim. 1:12; I Peter 1:3-7.
4. "One Lord" - Jesus Christ. The "Master", "controller", "owner". Whom we obey and to whom we yield. There is no "bond of peace" unless we seek to "understand Him". (Eph. 5:17).
5. *Tradition of a given denomination - even C.O.C.*
"One Faith" - the system by which we are rightly related to God (Rom. 1:16). This faith is "responsive trust" John 4:36.
6. "One Baptism" - immersion in water, to come into "union" with Christ (Rom. 6:1-4) for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). By which we ask for salvation and receive God's answer that it is given (I Pet. 3:21). By the fact there is "one" eliminates all other baptisms. *(IN WATER AND SPIRIT). Tit. 3:5*
7. "One God" - a Father (Rom. 8:15-17). *I Cor. 12:13*
 - a. "above all" -- sovereign in the universe and in history. *1 Cor. 6:1-4*
 - b. "through all" -- active in history and in life "who art" (who is there?). *1 Cor. 12:13*
 - c. "and in you all" -- within the life, the heart of a christian. (Eph. 3:14-20, note NOTE v:20.) *Butch.*

These three are generally thought to be interlinked to each other.

*1. RAUSCHENBACH
2. C.E.S. B.L.M.
3. Paphos - Euse
4. One in the
5. V. J. - de
6. "Four Builders"
7. Expt. - to "MAD"
8. "AS S. A. W. O. R. B.
9. P. O. T. O. R. E."*

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Conclusion:

1. I am not sure where the scriptures list the absolutes on which we must be united.
 - a. all truths are equally true, but not all truths are equally important (Jesus's donkey, Jesus's cross).
 - b. but, it seems that Eph. 4:1-6 gives a good starting point of indispensable foundation stones to unite.
 - c. yet, even with these if we don't "forbear one another in love", we will not "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace".
2. Relate the incident from Francis Schaeffer, The Mark of A Christian.

IAN IRWIN
3. Doctrine is important. We cannot be united in Jesus without these seven "ones". But, even with these we will have disagreements. And even though we agree on these, we can hate and fight each other. In the final analysis, the way Christians are one is to love each other.
4. This is also the way the world is convinced of Jesus. John 17:21 and John 13: 33-35.