

Unity in the Body of Christ

Key Verses: *“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism.”*
—*Ephesians 4:4,5*

Selected Scripture:
Ephesians 4:1-16

UNITY IN THE BODY OF

Christ has many features. As considered in our previous lesson, it first means that the relationship to God of each individual consecrated member of the body of Christ is based on the same foundation—faith in the redeeming blood of Jesus. In this we are unified, with Jesus as our common source of life in God’s sight.

There are other features to this unity. We must have unity in the sense that we all are to strive to follow the same pattern of character and life that Jesus set as an example for us to follow. We are to “walk worthy of the vocation” to which we have been called, developing the same character traits Jesus exemplified—“lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love.” (Eph. 4:1,2) Developing in this way helps us to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”—vs. 3

Our Key Verses, and also verse 6, speak of several aspects of unity that relate to fundamental teachings of the Bible. There is only “one body” of Christ being developed by God. There is “one Spirit,” God’s Holy Spirit, by which we are begotten. There is “one hope” of our calling—the hope of glory, honor, and immortality.

There is “one Lord,” our Lord Jesus Christ; “one faith” based on his redemptive work; and “one baptism” into his sacrificial death. There is “One God and Father of all,” emphasizing the fact that God is a separate being from the “one Lord” Jesus and the “one” Holy Spirit.

Paul tells us in our lesson that to help implement the unity of the body of Christ, God provided “apostles,” “prophets,” “evangelists,” “pastors and teachers.” These have all proclaimed harmoniously the message of truth to God’s people throughout the Gospel Age, “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” (vss. 11,12) The ultimate “unity of the faith,” however, will not come until the body of Christ is complete, having faithfully unto death reached “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”—vs. 13

We must take great care to maintain our unity in Christ, and be not as “children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine; . . . But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.” (vss. 14,15) Notice that Paul mentions two important things concerning our growth into Christ. First, we cannot grow into him if we are tossed about with every “wind of doctrine” we may hear. Jesus proclaimed one unified message of truth, not two or three, and we must claim as our own that one message of the Gospel. Secondly, growing up into Christ means that we will speak this one message of the Gospel—the Truth—in love, and by doing so, “grow up” into his character likeness.

The last verse of our lesson provides a fitting conclusion to this consideration of unity in Christ: “From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”—vs. 16 ■