**The Unity of the Spirit: What It Is, and How to Keep It**

**INTRODUCTION:**

1. Read Ephesians 4:1-6, with special emphasis on v. 3: “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (NAS—“being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”).
2. We could go in a number of different directions in discussing this unity, but let’s go in the direction the Holy Spirit has been taking us since the beginning of this epistle (through what He has revealed).

BODY:

1. God’s eternal plan of redemption is introduced to us all the way back in chapter 1.
   1. And it does include a provision for unity (1:9-10).
      1. Note especially this phrase in v. 10: “that He might gather together in one all things in Christ.”
         1. ESV—“to unite all things in Him.”
      2. This certainly includes you and me, and the rest of our brethren all over the face of the earth—including those who have died in the Lord.
   2. But for us to be united IN Christ, we first had to be united WITH Christ.
      1. And that’s exactly what happened in our conversion to Christ.
      2. Notice what God did for us when we came to Christ for the cleansing of our sin (2:4-6).
         1. He made us alive together WITH Christ; He raised us up together WITH Christ; and now we sit together WITH Christ in the heavenly places.
   3. Skip with me down to v. 14, where this thought of unity continues.
      1. After distinguishing between Jew and Gentile in the previous verses, let’s pick up the reading there and continue through v. 16.
      2. Both Jew and Gentile were separated from God by sin, but they were also separated from one another by the law of Moses, which was given only to Jews.
      3. But notice how Christ took care of both—He provided atonement for sin, giving both Jew and Gentile peace with God; and He broke down this law of separation between Jew and Gentile.
      4. What a marvelous plan—to reconcile them both to God in one body, and to give one covenant applicable to both.
   4. Let’s keep reading, though, through the end of this chapter, because the Holy Spirit reveals even more on this marvelous plan for unity (2:17-22).
      1. Note the elements of unity throughout this reading.
      2. Think about all the stones which have been fitted together to form this holy temple—people from nations all over the world, from all kinds of backgrounds, lifestyles, etc. People reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, and thus brought together into one body.
   5. Now to chapter 3, where Paul, by inspiration, writes the concerning the mystery of the gospel, which has now been revealed by the Holy Spirit to apostles and prophets.
      1. 3:6 describes the essence of it—“that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, of the same body, and the partakers of His promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.”
      2. Let’s pause for a minute and think about the travesty denominationalism truly is—how it is completely opposed to God’s eternal plan.
         1. Different religious bodies have been created, with different names and different doctrines. Essentially, new walls of separation have been created, and that is a travesty.
2. Now, let’s go back to where we began, in 4:3. How do we keep or preserve the unity of the Spirit?
   1. To keep it, we must first remember how it was created.
      1. It was created by people, one by one, being reconciled to God in Christ.
      2. We are in fellowship with one another, because we are in fellowship with the Father and the Son.
      3. We certainly can’t be united with those who have not been reconciled. We can’t be a fellow-citizen with someone who’s not a citizen, a fellow-heir with someone who’s not an heir. In other words, we can’t have fellowship with those who do not have fellowship with the Father and the Son.
      4. To keep this unity, then, the emphasis must be on each one of us maintaining our fellowship with God. Efforts toward unity should always emphasize this “vertical relationship,” because too much thinking on “horizontal lines” will inevitably lead to compromise.
   2. So how do we maintain this fellowship with God?
      1. We keep following the same truth which brought us into fellowship with God.
         1. 1:13: “In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.”
         2. Remember the law which separated Jew and Gentile? Look at what He tells them both to be striving for in 4:11-16 (notice especially v. 13).
         3. Remember the “ones” we read earlier, in 4:4-6. You can’t turn these ones into “severals” or “manys” and expect to have unity.
         4. “If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you will also abide in the Son and in the Father” (1 John 2:24).
      2. We keep walking worthy of the calling to which we have been called (4:1).
         1. What kind of people did God have in mind when He called us through the gospel? Again, let’s let the text speak for itself.
            1. 1:4: “just as He chose us in Him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be **holy** and without blame before Him in love.”
            2. 2:21: “in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a **holy** temple in the Lord”
         2. He called us to come out of the world, to be sanctified, to make our former conduct just that—former, to put off the old man and put on the new.
            1. 4:20-24 will explain.
            2. If we want to resurrect the old man, we’re not going to be united with our brethren, because we’re not united with Him.
      3. We keep on loving those with whom we’re united.
         1. Let’s return to our original context and notice the command in 4:2: “with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love.”
            1. We bear with one another because we are members of one another.
         2. Which is the very reason we’re told not to lie to one another in 4:25.
         3. The love we’re to show one another is the very love God showed us through Jesus Christ.
            1. 4:32.
            2. 5:25.
         4. How can we maintain fellowship with God if we can’t show the love of God? “He who abides in love abides in God, and God in Him” (1 John 4:16). “He who does not love his brother abides in death” (1 John 3:14).