

One Hope, One Lord

(Ephesians 4) After blitzing through chapter 3 of Ephesians we are now creeping our way through chapter 4, this chapter that is so critical for maintaining the peace and health of the Lord's church. **1-6** *Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,* ² *with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love,* ³ *being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* ⁴ *There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;* ⁵ *one Lord, one faith, one baptism,* ⁶ *one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.* In these last three verses you have the magnificent seven. The seven bonds that unite believers, that make us one. One body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one Father. We are looking at these bonds one by one. We pick up our look at these seven unifying bonds toward the end of verse 4. We covered the first two of the seven last week as we saw that we are united as members of one body, who share together in the one Holy Spirit of God. Now we can move on to the third bond of our unity which is our one hope. Christians are people of hope. Back in Ephesians 1:**18** *I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.* Here he mentions again, the hope of our calling which refers to the aspects of God's salvation that have not yet been realized. Our hope includes the perfection of our souls, the transformation of our bodies, the inheritance of the whole renewed earth and most of all, the sight of our Lord in light and beauty. That is the hope of our calling. And Paul sees there is something important about knowing this. The importance of this for maintaining peace is found in the unifying power of a mutual hope. When I played high-school basketball our team developed sort of our own slogan that we repeated to each other. Sort of like a war cry we would say, "To the coliseum." For us, that pointed to our goal of playing in the state championship game in the Jacksonville Coliseum. And the hope toward which we pressed unified us. The same thing is true for us as Christians. We are headed to the same place; we are striving toward the same goals. We are all being groomed and prepared for the marriage supper of the Lamb when we will, as one body, one bride, one church be presented to our Savior. Man alive that's exciting. Maybe our war-cry could be, *To the glory!* or *To the kingdom!* This is why I love to sing of what awaits us and I believe our worship has far too few songs that emphasize

the glory to come. One song that I just love refers to the day when *we will dance on the streets that are golden, the glorious bride and the great Son of Man, from every tongue, and tribe, and nation we'll join in the song of the Lamb. And oh, we'll stand by His side, a strong, pure spotless, bride.* That's a vision that excites me. That is our destiny! And when we ponder that destiny, when we consider what awaits us, it will draw us closer together. Look around you here. These are people with whom you are going to spend eternity only they'll be a lot better looking then. And they'll sing better too.

Here is what I'm suggesting. We need to look at what we are becoming even more than what we used to be or what we are. We all come from different places and diverse backgrounds. We were all sinners, but we sinned in distinct ways. And these differences can be the cause for contentions. Some of you were high church, some low church, some no church. Maybe even you were converted in different ways. Some heard a sermon, others read a tract, still others just prayed. How we got into the body of Christ may have been quite different. If we concentrate on those things we can splinter. John MacNeil, a Scottish preacher, imagines a conversation between two blind men who were healed by our Lord. One's story is given in Mark 8, the other in John 9. In John's gospel we read of how the Lord spat upon some clay and mixed it with spittle to anoint the man's eyes. Then he sent the man to wash in the pool of Siloam. In the case of the man in Mark's gospel the Lord did none of that. MacNeil imagined these two men meeting later and having a conversation wherein the guy from John's gospel asked the man from Mark how it felt when the Lord put the mud on his eyes. The man from Mark said, "I didn't feel anything; he didn't put mud on my eyes." "What!", replied the other, "No mud, why I don't believe that you have been healed at all. You must still be blind." And there you have the origin of two denominations: the Mudites and the Anti-mudites.

That is what looking back can do if we let it. Our unity is not found in what used to be, but in what is and even more so in what will be for us. Steve Brown tells the story of a wealthy Ohio farmer named Taylor who gave a job to a young man named Jamie. Jamie slept in the barn and proved to be a hard worker, and responsible, so much so that he was even put in charge of some of the other workers. One day Jamie came to Taylor and announced that he and the wealthy man's daughter had fallen in love. The young worker asked Taylor for his daughter's hand in marriage. Taylor was infuriated at his impudence and instead of giving him his daughter he kicked him off

the farm, and never heard from him again. Years later, Taylor was cleaning in the barn and came to an area where Jamie used to sleep. There where the straw was swept away, he was startled to find the place where Jamie had carved his full name in the wood. It read James A. Garfield. Taylor's undeserving farm hand had gone on to become the president of the United States. Mr. Taylor could have become the first father-in-law, but he blew it. Don't make the mistake of focusing on the past. A similar story comes from the life of Philip Henry, the father of the famous commentator Matthew Henry. When a young man, Philip fell in love with a young lady who belonged to a higher social class than his own; and she fell in love with him. They wanted to get married, so she began to speak to her parents about this, and they did not like the idea at all. The father turned on his daughter and said derisively of Philip, "Where does he come from?" To which the daughter said, "I do not know where he has come from but I do know where he is going." And ah, that's the critical thing. When I do premarital counseling the background and history of each partner are important to look at and we would be foolish to ignore those things, but what is much more important are things like goals and values and priorities that will shape the future. We sang that hymn: "I am bound for the promised land, oh who will come and go with me?" Who shares with me in this common hope, this common destiny? With these I am one.

We continue on now to our fourth bond of unity. Paul says in verse 5 that there is one Lord. ® That term *Lord* in the New Testament generally has specific reverence to the Lord Jesus. And here it notes that our connection with Him connects us with each other. He is it. He is the one around whom we have gathered. Our existence as a people, as a group, as a church is all about Jesus. He unites us in two ways. Get these two subpoints. We are united around His person, and we are united under His authority. ® First then we see that we are united around His person. If you came into our church from another culture or another planet, as an initial impression, you would gather that we are basically a Jesus fan club. And that is not a bad way to describe us. A fan club is a group of people united by their devotion to their hero. Isn't that us? Sure it is. If we love each other, it is because each of us loves the Lord and is loved by the Lord. He is the center of it all. Other religions: Buddhism, Hinduism, Baha'i, all of these center around a truth or a way or a certain lifestyle. But Jesus says John 14:6 *I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.* Christianity is built on a person. And a person of such enormous magnetism that he can unite the most disparate elements. If you have read the late Chuck Colson's

story, the book entitled “Born Again,” you read of how shocked Colson was to find that when he became a Christian his political enemies became his brothers. Those who opposed his policies loved him for Christ’s sake. In the same way, there is a little known miracle described for us in Luke chapter 6. See if you can find the miracle here. **13-15** *He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles: ¹⁴ Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James and John; and Philip and Bartholomew; ¹⁵ and Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot.* Did you see it? In this simple list of the disciples you have a miracle. It is there in verse 15 where it lists two men you should know about. One of them is named Simon the Zealot ®. He is called *the Zealot* to distinguish him from Simon Peter and also because he was apparently a member of a political party existing in Jerusalem at this time and known as *the Zealots*. The Zealot party was devoted to the overthrow of Roman rule. They hated the Roman oppressors and sought to drive them out, if necessary, by violent means. Interesting. The other name to note in verse 15 is Matthew, also known as Levi. You may know from the gospels that Matthew was of what occupation? He was a tax-collector. In those days and in that Jewish culture tax collectors were regarded as just beneath pond scum. They were the ones who had sold their souls to Rome in order to extract taxes from their own people to finance the Roman war machine. Jewish loyalists especially hated tax-collectors and of all groups the ones most hostile to them would be the Zealots. You beginning to see the miracle here? Had a Matthew and a Simon met in a back alley somewhere one of them may not have come out. But, here they are, serving together on the same team, working for the same cause, united by their common link to the Master.

This is what Jesus can do. This is what Jesus will do for us, if we understand rightly. And we should let no other loyalty draw us apart. Lots of times people get united around a person, but our loyalty to Jesus must go beyond any of that. If you read I Corinthians you find that the church had a problem with excessive loyalty to mere men. I Corinthians 1:**11-12** *I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe’s people, that there are quarrels among you. ¹² Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, “I am of Paul,” and “I of Apollos,” and “I of Cephas,” and “I of Christ.* You have these factions in the church. Christians who aren’t getting along because of differing loyalties. With God’s help, we can’t let that happen! We may appreciate the ministry of certain individuals. I’ve always appreciated RC Sproul a great deal. I’m one of his fans. But, some

of my closest friends, for various reasons, are not RC fans. They are not united with me in my admiration of him. And that's okay. Some of you like John MacArthur; some of you don't. Some of you like Charles Stanley; some of you don't. Does any of that really matter? No. Our oneness is found in our admiration of and allegiance to Jesus only. We have one Lord. Paul says it has to be that way. I Corinthians 1:**13** *Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?* The point is that we have one Lord! one Master on whom we must focus and around whom we must unite.

Now, our second subpoint here has to do with authority. I said we unite around the one Person and secondly now we unite under the one Authority. The title *Lord* speaks of the authority of Jesus. He is the Head of the church. We saw last time that there is one body and that one body has how many heads? Only one. ® Monsters may have two, but the church only one. Ephesians 1:**22** *He (God) put all things in subjection under His (Jesus') feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church.* The body of Christ is not a democratic institution. It is a monarchy. Jesus rules here. He is the founder, the owner, the president. If you are looking for an organization to join where you can throw your weight around the church isn't it. Certainly this one isn't. Around here Jesus is the heavy and we are all lightweights. He is the King. And He tolerates no challengers to His authority and neither should we. There is a certain intolerance in the Christian faith that ought to be there however politically incorrect it may be. We have only one Lord. And we will tolerate no other claims to that position. This bugs the daylights out of the more liberal minded among us who want us to open up to many sources of authority, but it must be this way. I Corinthians 8:**5-6** *even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords,⁶ yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.* Paul says we may live in a culture with lots of things being looked to as authorities, as gods, and lords. But for us, for Christians, there can be only one. We are united by a certain intolerance to all others. Call us the Intolerance Club. We unite around our exclusive devotion to Christ. Believers in Jesus learn that we don't need anything more than Him. Colossians 2:**9** *In Him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form.* 2:**3** *in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* Why should we look anywhere else? We learn that there is sufficiency in Jesus. Beyond that we learn that it is betrayal to look anywhere else. We are joined to our Lord like a bride to her man and it would be

adulterous to embrace the yoke of anyone else. Our relationship with Him is exclusive. Jesus put it this way. Matthew 6:24 *No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other.* He doesn't say it isn't good to have two masters. He says it is impossible because ultimate loyalty cannot be placed in two directions. The first sermon I ever preached as a pastor of a church was from Ephesians 4:1 in which I spoke of myself as a prisoner of the Lord. I wanted the church I served to understand who my Boss is. I was not going to be one of those pastors with a hundred bosses. I have one Lord and I'm in this for Him.

Exclusive devotion is a biblical mandate that has always been a problem with the people of the world. In the Old Testament this was the source of great tension. The Egyptians or Philistines or Babylonians never really were bothered by the worship of Yahweh. That was okay by them, but what grated on them was this exclusivity - the refusal to worship the Sun God or Baal or the Emperor as well. But this is what God demanded of them. Thou shalt worship the Lord Thy God and Him only shalt Thou serve. This is why Judaism and Christianity have always been seen as a threat to the state. Communist China today, in some regions, viciously persecutes biblical faith because Christians maintain an ultimate allegiance to something other than the state. We do so because we have one Lord. And there is no man who holds that place or can bear that name. I appreciate that in Anglo culture we don't have people naming their children - Jesus. In Roman Catholic, Latin cultures they will do this and I don't think it's a good idea. When a great athlete retires or moves on from a team, that team will often retire his jersey number. Interestingly, there is only one Steeler whose number has been retired. Anybody here know who that was? #70 was Ernie Stautner who retired in 1963. Ernie made his number too sacred for further use. I wish the pope would retire the name of Jesus and forbid its use. But even more so is this true for the term, "Lord." I have a good friend named Mele, and Mele has a Hawaiian mother and a Scottish father. Mom got to name her daughter. She called her Melelani. Dad got to name the son. He called him William Lord Lyall III. The dad went by *Bill*, but the son they chose to call *Lordy*, the diminutive of his middle name - which was *Lord*. So this kid grows up being called *Lordy* - a bit odd but tolerable. But you know how, a lot of times a kid named *Joey* will go off to college and come back named *Joe*. Or Billy will come back as *Bill*. Or Tommy as *Tom*. Well, *Lordy* goes off to college and comes back wanting to be called, *Lord*. For a time he served as youth pastor of my church in

Ocala, Florida. I remember looking at the phone system there one time and it had labels for the intercom numbers. It had one labeled *Tom*, and one for *Jimmy* and one for *Paul* and one for *Lord*. It looked like a hotline to heaven. But this is what he wanted to be called. It was his name, but I could never do it. To me, that title *Lord*, has been given to Jesus and retired forever. There is one Lord, and there is no other to whom we can give our allegiance. There is no other under whose authority believers may unite.

That brings us back to the point of our text. The solo Lordship of Jesus unites Christians. It binds us together around His person and under His authority. You see, if you believe that Jesus is Lord and I believe He is Lord than we are going to have an awful lot in common. We will not agree about everything of course, and our unity will never be perfect this side of eternity. Here is a poster some of us married couples may want to put up in our bedrooms, and it could work in the church as well. *Strife – as long as we have each other we'll never run out of problems.* True. But, in Christ, we can expect a growing like-mindedness and certainly on the major issues of life. We will agree about who Jesus is and about the way of salvation and about many things taught by our King. And the more His lordship becomes a practical reality in us the more unified we will become. If you choose the way of the Lord and I choose the way of the Lord, even if we come from very different places we are going to find ourselves bumping into each other a great deal, and increasingly so. We will become as one under the reign and command of Christ. Many of you know who EV Hill is, one of the most popular preachers in the country before he passed. Ed Hill left a church in Texas to become pastor of the Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Los Angeles. At the time he was asked to come be the pastor in the LA church, that congregation had dwindled greatly in size and influence. It had three lawsuits pending against it in court and had endured so much strife and discord that policemen were hired to keep the peace on Sundays. The church was a mess and Hill knew it. So, when he was hired to be the pastor. He agreed under one condition. He said, "If I come, everybody's out of office. We won't have any deacons, no committee chairmen, nothing." And they agreed. Hill said that when he started at the church, every Wednesday night they had church meeting. And he began with a prayer and then opened for them the word of God. And he started by teaching those people what the Lord says a church ought to be. At the end of the hour, he would finish teaching the word and one of the men would say, "Pastor, I move that's what we believe." And in the next seventeen years of harmony and blessing they didn't have one single

negative vote in the church meeting. The reason that disjointed church found unity is they finally got beyond the opinions of men and unified around one Lord, one Ruler, One King whose word is law and whose will is our command.

I hear so much talk in the Christian world about how different denominations and churches need to come together and get over our differences and love each other. And I am all for that but at times I think the focus may be off. Maybe we shouldn't focus on getting together but on getting obedient. If our church gets serious about knowing and obeying King Jesus and the church down the road gets serious about knowing and obeying King Jesus unity will follow. It has to. If in my walk I am drawing ever closer to Christ and in your walk you are doing the same - what's going to happen between us? We will merge into one, walking in the footsteps of Jesus who is our Leader, and our Lord. That is the unity I want. It works for families. It works for churches. Unity in a common hope, unity around the person of Jesus, unity under the authority of One Lord. May God make it so.