

Body Building, part 2 of Bulking Up  
March 24, 2013

I want to start this morning with something that is very important to Jesus. And anything that is important to Jesus should be important to His followers.

Let me set the scene for you. We're going to look at part of a prayer of Jesus. It is the last night He spends with His followers before His arrest. That arrest, is only a few hours away. Following that He will be scourged, beaten, and crucified. This horrible experience is much on His mind.

But it isn't the only thing on His mind. Even at such a time as this He is thinking of His disciples, both the present and future ones. He is thinking of the church. Let's see what He prayed. We're just going to look at one part of His prayer in John 17.

**John 17:20-21 (NIV) *"My prayer is not for them alone."***

The "them" He is praying for are His original disciples. Jesus had been praying about those disciples. Now He switches the focus of His prayer.

***"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message..."***

He prayed for His first disciples. Now He prays for His future disciples, including you and me.

***"... that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in me and I am in You."***

He is praying for us, you and me, to be one. God, the Father, and God, the Son, are one. They aren't one person. They are two persons. But they are one in purpose and will. That has been demonstrated all through the book of John. They were working on the same set of facts, the same plan, and were of one will to accomplish that plan. Jesus never awoke in the morning and wondered to Himself what He should do that day. No, He did only what He saw God, the Father doing. He did only what God, the Father planned. His message was only what God, the Father wanted Him to say. He lived out of the knowledge that He was the one and only Son of God, the one who would save us from our sins, the only one who could do so.

There is only one path to God, one Savior of the world. And based on that truth, there was only one plan. Jesus and the Father and the Holy Spirit are perfectly united in purpose and will. Jesus was living out that one purpose.

In the same way, Jesus expects His followers to be united in the truth of Jesus and living the same purpose of God's will. The church must be united. That is what Jesus prays for. Jesus wants Emmanuel Baptist Church to have unity. Our unity is based on the truth of the Good News that we can be forgiven of sin. Our unity is based on the truth of Jesus' death and resurrection. This is the basis for our unity. This is so vital to Jesus that it was on His mind in the last hours before His passion began.

Notice what Jesus did not pray for. He didn't pray about how big our building should be. He didn't pray about how big our budget should be. He didn't pray about how many staff persons we should have. He didn't pray about how many members we would have. He didn't pray

about any of those things. His prayer was about unity of purpose, something that underlies all of those more mundane aspects of many churches.

He prayed that we be united. He prayed that we be one. He prayed that we be of the same mind. This unity is important to Jesus, it must therefore be important to us.

Paul addresses this unity in his letter to the church in the city of Ephesus. There is a lot in this passage, so I want to read the whole thing, and then come back and look at parts.

### **Ephesians 4:2-7, 11-16 (NIV)**

*Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.*

<sup>3</sup> *Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*

<sup>4</sup> *There is one body and one Spirit-- just as you were called to one hope when you were called--  
<sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

<sup>7</sup> *But to each of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it...*

<sup>11</sup> *It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

<sup>14</sup> *Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

To help you get a handle on this, let's start with the end goal.

### **The goal:**

#### **Ephesians 4:12-13 (NIV)**

<sup>12</sup> *that the body of Christ may be built up*

<sup>13</sup> *we all reach unity in the faith*

*we all reach unity in the knowledge of the Son of God*

*we all become mature, (having Christ's character formed in us)*

Why is the unity of the church so important? It is important because it is our spiritual muscles. Last week the focus of the sermon was on building yourself up with spiritual muscle. Today the focus is on building the church up with spiritual muscle. This spiritual muscle is our unity in Christ. The term "body of Christ" in this context means the church. It is the church that needs bulking up with spiritual muscle.

Look at what this unity does for us.

### **The meaning of our unity:**

#### **Ephesians 4:14 (NIV)**

<sup>14</sup> *Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.*

Have you ever been to an ocean beach with toddlers? They have no strength against the waves. The waves come in and knock them down, and then as they try to get back up, the wave goes back out and knocks them down again.

That's how it is for us adults, not with real water, but rather with waves and winds of false teaching. Today in America, we have the world's religions. You can find Islam and Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and Unitarianism, Christian Scientism and Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses and Spiritism, devil worship and witchcraft, atheism and agnosticism, and many more. All of these are pushing at our faith in Jesus. They are trying to knock us off of our stand on Jesus.

If we are not united in the truth of the Good News, then we may be led astray. Infants don't know enough not to be led astray by strangers. We have to protect them.

My sons, when they were young, trusted anybody. They were not cautious enough to recognize those who would purposely mislead them.

Jesus knows we are all stronger in the faith when we are united in that faith. If I am alone, and have all these philosophies and religions pulling at me, I am in great danger of doubting and being moved. But if we are huddled together, with our spiritual arms locked in unity, we are more secure.

## **So what must we do to be united?**

### **1) Agree on the seven ones.**

#### **Ephesians 4:4-5, 15 (NIV)**

<sup>4</sup> *There is one body and one Spirit-- just as you were called to one hope when you were called--*  
<sup>5</sup> *one Lord, one faith, one baptism;* <sup>6</sup> *one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

<sup>15</sup> *speaking the truth (of the Gospel) in love, we will in all things grow up into...Christ.*

There are those who believe, like us that there is only one path to God. But they believe in a different path. Both Muslims and Mormons believe in only one path. But the path each believes in is different from each other and different from what we believe.

There are others who believe there are many paths. They believe any path to God is legitimate. This means they are free to make up their own path, accepting what they like and rejecting what they don't like.

Years ago I was visiting someone in Crownsville State Hospital. When I left the building, a doctor came out and stopped me. He wanted to talk about religion. He was Hindu and explained that he believed in Jesus too. The Hindus, according to him, believe in lots of paths to God. They hear what they like in other religions and incorporate it into their religion. He was trying to get me to go along with the multiple path belief and not hold to Jesus only.

Still others don't believe in any God at all. So of course there is no path either. This life is all there is. Life really has no meaning. But they live on.

Our unity is on the truth of only one God and one path through the one Son of God, who is both our Savior and our Lord. Without that, we will crumble as a church.

## 2) Relate to each other like Jesus does.

### **Ephesians 4:2 (NIV)**

<sup>2</sup> *Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.*

Relationships in the church matter to our unity. The three key Christian virtues are faith, hope, and love. The love virtue refers to how we treat each other. It is our relationships in the church. How we treat each other is the most visible aspect of Jesus that others ought to see in us. Faith is invisible. Hope is invisible. Love, not the feeling, but the action, is visible.

How we related to each other in the church will either build up our unity, or tear it down. Jesus wants us to build it up through love. Good relationships are necessary for our unity.

## 3) Serve as we can.

### **Ephesians 4:12, 16 (NIV)**

<sup>12</sup> *to prepare God's people for works of service*

<sup>16</sup> *From him (Christ) the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament (member), grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

Your service is vital to the building up of your church. Your service is needed. Your participation is necessary. We depend upon your participation, your service, your helping, as Jesus has graced you to do, so we can all mature in Christ and see His kingdom spread.

There are elected service positions and non-elected service positions. All of them contribute to building up our unity. To build up the church we need the participation of us all. We don't all do the same things. But we all have things to do. Do your part to build up the church in the spiritual muscle of unity.

Invitation:

Jesus did not die on the cross so good people could go to heaven. If you are a good person and are trusting in your good life to get to heaven, Jesus can't help you get there.

Jesus died to help those who don't deserve heaven, will never deserve heaven, and admit they don't deserve heaven. If this is you, then I have good news for you today. Jesus died for you. God accepts Jesus' death as a substitute for you, if you are willing to believe it and receive Jesus as your Savior and Lord, you can be forgiven of your sins and inherit eternal life.

I know that is asking a lot of you. You might wonder why God would accept a substitute for you who do not deserve heaven? He does so because He loves you. He loves you so much that He made a way for even you to be forgiven of your sins and receive eternal life with Him in heaven.

I am one of those who do not deserve heaven. Come and join with me in believing in Jesus, being baptized into the name of Jesus, and following Him with our lives. If you are ready to believe and turn your life over to Him today, pray the prayer at the end of the outline. It doesn't need to be those exact words. But it needs to be those ideas, from your heart, mind, and will to Jesus.

What have you got to lose? You already know that you can't get to heaven on your own. Today, take a chance on Jesus.

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**Sample Prayer to receive Jesus as Savior and Lord:**

Jesus, I admit that I am a sinner against God. I know my sin deserves death and hell. I need a rescuer, a savior. I believe You are the Savior I need, because You died for my sins. I now receive You as my Savior and turn my life over to You as Lord. Amen.