

THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT
January 17, 2016 morning service
Ephesians 4:1-6

Take your Bible and go to Ephesians 4 and we'll begin reading in verse 1 and read through verse 6 in just a moment. So be here tonight at 5:30. Stop by the product table and visit with some of these students and, Dr. Whaley, thank you again for coming and being here with sweet Beth. Good to see you right there behind him. Glad you're here for this day so you'll want to visit with them after the service today, tonight before and after church. It'll be a good time.

Well we're in this series called "Together" and we're in it together because together we can and together we shall. Together we can do more than we can do by ourselves. So we're looking at this word and we come today to look at the unity of the spirit. Paul speaks of it in Ephesians 4 and we'll read only verses 1 through 6 but really this thematic thread runs all through the first 16 verses of Ephesians 4 and we'll end with verse 16 in just a little bit as we conclude this morning.

Some of you are here and you need to unite with Christ today. You need to be saved today. Some of you are here and you need to unite with Olive Baptist Church. You do that by moving your membership here from a church that you've come from or you would, as that gentleman was baptized, you'd come by baptism into our fellowship and unite with us. But if you're going to unite with the Lord, unite with the church, it is a spirit-work that has to be done. The key element here is not that we decide who number one is but that we decide to be one, one all together. Paul speaks to the church at Ephesus and says – you follow along beginning in chapter 4 and verse 1.

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit [there is our thought for the morning] in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; [verse number 5] one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.¹

The unity of the spirit. Paul uses a lot of illustrations when he talks about the church but I believe his favorite and the one that he uses here in verses 4, 12, and again in verse 16 is that of the body. The body, as we come together with the body being whole. That means the feet and the hands and the head and the hair and the nose and the ears and the eyes and the tongue and the teeth and the liver and the

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gallbladder. Parts is parts you know. Paul speaks about putting all the parts together. Jesus is the head and we are the parts but if the parts are severed from the head, you don't have a body, you've got a corpse. I'm telling you, I've preached in a lot of churches that were not bodies, they were a corpse. Dead. I'm grateful to God I pastor a church that's alive today and that the body parts come together to function. It's not all about the hand or the foot. It's not all about you, not about me. It's about us together as the body of Christ.

So this morning let's look at this word unity and see four items about this unity of the body of Christ. Number one. He speaks to the character of the unity. That's in the first three verses where he gives us these characteristics. Most of them would be a fruit of the spirit but if you're going to be united as a church at Olive, then you must have characteristics that put us together.

Last night we were here late. Pace High School had their football banquet. Coach Lindsey who's one of our deacons in this service today was here. It's his last one as he's retiring and so they slipped Emmett Smith in from the Dallas Cowboys and Escambia High School. I spent about two hours with Emmett last night over in my office before and after the banquet and holding him there and keeping him. We began to talk about just varied things. He and his brother were here and they asked me two questions. They said, "First of all, how long have you been the pastor here?" I said, "25 years." They said, "My Lord. That's unheard of. That doesn't happen very often." I said, "No, it doesn't." He said, "How old is this church?" I said, "Well it's 120 years old." He said, "My goodness." They wanted to know how you hold a church together for 120 years. We began to talk a little bit about our history.

Let me tell you, friend, a church does not stay and last without splintering and dissolving and dying unless there is unity of the spirit. That unity comes through the character of its members and its parts. The character is found here as he says in humility, all humility. It means lowliness of mind. What that word means in the Greek construct is you're not a smart aleck. A lot of smart alecks in church just popping off about stuff they ought not pop off about because they don't know enough to pop off. When you think you do, that's when you pop. There's got to be humility. Lowliness of the mind is what he's speaking of here. Not a know-it-all but we come together needing each other.

Secondly is gentleness. That second character quality is gentleness. We translate it in the King James as meekness here. It's a fruit of the spirit. It's a trait of the Lord Jesus where it spoke about him being meek. That word gentle is really strength that's under control. It's like a mighty stallion that runs wild but is then broken and saddled and comes to be a servant because that great powerful animal has come under the control of another and there is a gentleness, a meekness. That's what has to

happen to you. It's what has to happen to me. In all of our strength we come broken before the Lord.

Thirdly is patience. Notice he says, "With all humility and gentleness, with patience." The construct there speaks of suffering long. The word longsuffering. I Corinthians 13, that great love chapter, says that love suffers long. If you're going to make the church go forth in unity, there are going to have to be some people with long suffering. Amen. You move through some things that are not pleasant but you suffer long.

There's humility, gentleness, longsuffering. Number four is the word persistence. Notice it right here. Diligent. Verse 3 says being diligent to preserve the unity. You've got to keep it in the bond of peace. You're persistent. Amen. Now that word diligent, its root means to study, like these students have to study. Vernon showed us all those classrooms where they have to study. That's this word here. You must be persistent in what you think and how you study and you're diligent as you look and bring together.

Then there's one last one and it's found in our text here in the end of verse 2. With all humility and gentleness, patience, showing tolerance – oh my – for one another in love. You ever have to tolerate some church folks? That never happens to me but I know it does you. Amen? Now tolerance can be a very negative word. There's some things you ought not tolerate. Our churches and our land, we tolerate some things we shouldn't tolerate today. But in the church tolerance can be a positive as well.

It's like two dogs. You've got a big dog and then you've got a little puppy. You've seen them. You've had them at your house. That larger dog is three or four years old and then you bring a puppy in the house. Oh a puppy is a lot of fun. Sharp little teeth, chew on everything. They chew on your shoes. They'll yap and bark. That little dog will jump on the big dog and they'll chew on the ears of a big dog and they'll bite and bark. They can't whip the big dog but they aggravate it. What's that large dog do? He tolerates the puppy. Why? Because he knows that puppy will grow and he's got to – friend, there's some yapping you've got to tolerate. They'll grow up. Now mark this down. If that little dog turns two and keeps yapping, that big dog will finally say, "I've had enough" and will grab that younger dog by the nap of the neck and drag him out in the yard and give him a lesson and he'll straighten up.

For the young, immature, you tolerate them growing but when it's time to grow up, sometimes you've got to take a believer out in the back yard and have a come to Jesus meeting. Ah, some of ya'll have been in that meeting, have you? I've been the taker and I've been the taken. Amen? You see, what characterizes us is the unity, the unity of the spirit. It's not about me. It's not about you. It's about the body. It's about the honor of the Lord and so together we can do it but it takes character. It takes

humility and gentleness and patience, love, persistence, and tolerance of bringing people along.

There is the character of this unity. Secondly in this text we see there is the church of unity. Notice it in verse number 4. There is one body. Seven times he uses the word "one." It's a perfection number, a completion number. He says, "There's one body, one spirit, just as you were called, and one hope." This is the church. There's one body, the body of Christ. There's to be one body. We come all together as one body. Then there is one spirit. The one body is the entity, that's the church. The one spirit is the entrance into the entity. The only way to get into the church is to be born of the spirit, to be regenerated in new birth.

Now hear me. There are many evil spirits but there is only one Holy Spirit. All kinds of evil spirits but the Holy Spirit draws you, births you, regenerates you, saves you, and places you into the one body all together. Hillcrest and East Brent, Potential, Immanuel, First, Second, New Hope, all churches. We come together. We're in the body. It's amazing to me how we kind of get aggravated and competitive with one another.

It reminds me of the story I read years ago of the two men that Jesus healed of blindness. One is in Mark 8 and the other one is in John 9. Two people that were blind and Jesus did it differently. To one of the men, when He found him blind, He spit in the ground, made a mud pack, and put it on his eyes and healed him. To the other man He didn't do that. He spoke a word and healed him. The story is that these two men years later got together and said, "I was blind. Jesus healed me." He said, "What happened?" These guys would not go to church together because they got healed differently and they started two denominations, the mudites and the anti-mudites. "So, you know Jesus, the only way He does it is He spit in the ground and made mud and put it on my eye." "Well He didn't do that to me." He said, "I bet you're still blind, just putting on."

We laugh at such but you know in the church sometimes we're just as silly because there's not a unity in the body. You see, the church is a church of unity. I'm working. I shared with you last week – next Sunday I think I'll announce a date to you when we're going to have a solemn assembly and we're going to call churches together, Baptists and Methodists and Assemblies of God, and we're going to come together and we're going to have a Sunday night prayer time asking God to help us to have the fire of God fall on all of us. I've been praying with some of our local pastors. I met one last week and I'm meeting with three or four more this week. So we're just trying to – that doesn't mean we're all going to believe and do exactly the same thing on non-essentials but those that claim Christ as Lord, the deity of Christ and inerrancy of scripture, fullness of the Holy Spirit. We've got more in common than we let on and so we need to come together as the church of unity. Amen.

The unity of the spirit. There's the character. There's the church. Thirdly, there is the confession. I almost made this the whole sermon today but I want you to see it and it's right here in verse 5. I believe it could be the confession of the church. Let's just read verse 5 all together. It's just six words so read it and say it out loud with me. Here we go. *One Lord, one faith, one baptism.* One more time. Let's say it together. *One Lord, one faith, one baptism.* That could be our confession. It's enough to bring the church together as we confess one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

When we say one Lord we're saying, "I'm saved." When we say one faith we're saying, "I am sure." When we're saying one baptism we're saying, "I am separated." Let's look at those. Number one. One Lord. One Lord. I am saved. Romans 10:9 speaks to us about this thought of confessing Jesus as Lord. When you go over to Philippians chapter 2, verse 11, we find that confession, "Jesus is Lord." We believe in our heart and confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord.

Now hear me, friend. If you're going to be saved, you've got to have one Lord and you're not it. You've got to leave the lordship of yourself and come to the foot of the cross and make Jesus your Lord. That's how you get saved. You'll cry out, "Lord, save me." Jesus is Lord and our confession is one Lord. One. Just one Lord. Not two, not three, not ten, not seven, but one. Jesus is one. There's not another like Him. Muhammad is not like Him. Buddha's not like Him. Nobody's Lord except Jesus Christ. He's our Lord and therefore I am saved. One Lord.

Secondly is one faith. One faith says, "I am sure." Amen. It is the body of our faith. It is what we believe. It's Jude verse number 3 where we find – just flip over there to Jude right at the end of your Bible. In Jude verse number 3, you'll find it. *Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the [what? The one] faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.* The faith. It is the body of our faith that we draw together. It's what we believe. It's how I'm sure.

Now I want to ask you something. Are you sure that you know that you're going to heaven when you die? How do you know that? It's not because of the way you feel. It's because of what the word of God says about you. Your sins are forgiven. You've got faith and that faith is all that God has given us. It is the faith once for all delivered to the saints. There's one Lord and I'm saved. There's one faith and I'm sure Jesus is the faith. Thirdly, there's one baptism. It says I am separated. Now some people when you read will say this is spirit baptism but He's already dealt with spirit baptism when he talked about it a few verses back, that there's one spirit. But here there is one baptism. This is water baptism in this verse in verse number 5. Just like that gentleman was baptized this morning, if you've never been baptized, you ought to be baptized because

in baptism it says that you are separated. Baptism is a bold, daring profession of separation unto Christ.

It says three things. It speaks about your past redemption, a present regeneration, and a future resurrection. It simply says in the past, redeemed, redeemed, redeemed how I love to proclaim it. Presently I am living in regeneration. I am made new in Christ and it points forward to that that is coming, a future resurrection that we are buried with Christ and we are raised out of the water. If you've never been baptized – let me tell you, when Paul wrote this talking about one baptism, nobody was baptizing infants. Nobody was sprinkling. The way of baptism, the mode is that of immersion. That's the only kind of baptism you'll find in all the word of God. They walked down into the water. Jesus walked down into the water. I tell people all the time, "I want to be buried like Jesus. I want to be baptized like Jesus." Don't cremate me. Put me in a hole. Number two, the way Jesus was baptized is the way I want to be baptized. That's the way you ought to be baptized. So if Jesus is your Lord you ought to follow Him in baptism, believer's baptism by immersion.

I've shared with you before. While in Texas almost 30 years ago we baptized a boy one morning with a long ponytail, all the way down his back. I baptized him. After he came up out of the water he shook his head like a sheepdog. He wet me all over. I couldn't see out my glasses. My hair was wet. We all laughed, you know. His hair just went everywhere. It was long.

Well after the service we went back and his girlfriend was with him that day. She walked up to me and I'll never forget it. She grabbed me by my forearm. With both her hands she grabbed my forearm right here and she said, "What did you do to Eddie?" I said, "What?" She said, "Up there." I said, "I baptized him." She said, "Why did you do that?" I said, "Well, he professed faith in Christ. Jesus was baptized that way." She looked at me funny so I just kind of took a shot. I said, "Tell me, were you reared in a Catholic home?" She said, "I was." I said, "I bet you were baptized as an infant." She said, "I was." I said, "Tell me about that day. What were you wearing and who did it and where?" She said, "Well I don't know." I said, "What do you mean you don't know?" She said, "Well I was just a baby. I don't know."

I said, "Hear me, sweet girl. I'm not throwing rocks at your church. I'm just trying to lift up what we see in scripture. You see, baptism is not something that someone else does for you. Baptism is your declaration that Jesus is your Lord." I'll never forget it. Brother Keith, these are the words she said to me. She said, "Well that's what I like about you Baptists. Your faith is so stinkin' personal." Now that was her modifier, not mine, alright? "Your faith is so stinkin' personal." She meant that in a positive way.

You see, baptism is stinkin' personal. Your momma doesn't do it for you. Your daddy doesn't do it for you. It's what you do. It's your public profession of faith. It's

your declaration that He's Lord. It is one Lord, yours. It's one faith, yours. It's one baptism, yours. You should repent and be baptized. If you've never done that, you ought to do it. It is the confession of unity. Everybody that's a part of this church has been baptized. It unifies us. It's one of the markers that brings us together.

Then lastly, not only the character in the church and the confession of unity, but there's one last thing and that is in verse number 6 we see the Creator, the Creator of our unity. Notice one God and Father of all who is over all, through all, and in all. Seven times he uses the word one and then he comes to the allness factor about the Creator of unity. Only God can make this unity because He's the God and Father, the Creator.

In this text notice there are four alls. He's the God of all. Does that mean that an atheist that He's his God? No. He's in the context of the church here. Of believers. He is the God of everyone who believes. He's the Father of everyone who believes. We know He's not the father of all mankind because in John 8:44 Jesus said, "If you don't follow Me, you're of your father the devil." God's not everybody's Father. He's everybody's creator but He's only your Father when you've been born again. So he's speaking to the church and he's saying the Creator of this unity is all of the saints that believe, He's the God and Father of all.

Number two. He's over all. That means that He has all authority and all power. He rules in your life and reigns over our lives. He's of all, He's the Father over all, He's the Father, Creator through all. He accomplishes His purpose in His people, the church. He works through us. Amen. He works through us. He's in us, therefore, He works through us.

I believe God uses His church. How does He build this school at Liberty? He builds it through His church. Let me tell you, when they take a choir tour, they don't line up a bunch of Kiwanis Clubs to go sing for. They go sing in churches and some prisons where a lot of our Baptists are. There were 32 saved over there in the prison this weekend. Amen. But you see, the church is how God works and He brings that through His church. We're not perfect as long as you're a member and I'm a pastor. We're not going to be perfect but God takes us and He's in us and He works through us.

He's the Creator and the God of all, over all, through all, and then He is in all. Friend, if you're saved, God's in you today. I'm crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ lives in me; and the life I now live I live by faith in the son of God, that loved me and gave Himself for me. Galatians 2:20. He is in me and through me.

Now take your Bible very quickly and turn over to verse 16. I want you to see this. We've got just a minute. Look at verse 16. He gets down to the end of this context of unity and he says this: *from whom the whole body [the whole body], being*

fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. Let me tell you, there's a sermon series in this verse. Look at this. Let's just break it down for just a moment and then we're going to give an invitation. Somebody's going to come get saved. Somebody's going to come unite with the church. Somebody's going to come fall in this altar and pray. Look at it.

The whole body. The whole body. That's all of us, fitted and held together. I tell you, the church is held together by the grace of God. What holds me together today? My skin holds me together. It keeps all the stuff on the inside that's supposed to stay in there. It has some bulges in it and some of what's on the inside keeps trying to get on the outside evidently. We're held together. We're one. We're a unit. If your epidermis is in difficulty then you're going to be in difficulty. You'll get to a place where it won't heal up. We're all held together.

He goes on to say, every joint – I'm 62. I'm beginning to have a little bit of arthritis every now and then. My wife struggles with it. I have many of you that see me on Sunday when I preach, I'll point like this. The reason I point like this is because my little finger moves like that because it's been broken numerous times. I have a big calcium deposit. Every time I go to the doctor, I say, "What do you think?" He'll say, "If it doesn't hurt, don't mess with it." He said, "The day will come that we'll probably have to go in there and do something with that but unless it just bothers you, don't worry with it." So that joint doesn't supply very much. It can bend but it pops.

Then your joints will get stiff. He's just using a picture here, an illustration, a metaphor. Every joint. One of our sweet ladies, she's in church today, she told me this morning, "Pastor, I'll be gone several weeks. I won't be here." I said, "Why?" She said, "I'm having a full knee replacement. They're going to take one knee out and they're going to put another one in." I said, "Three things that I want you to know. Number one, I'm going to pray for you. Number two, I'm going to miss you. Number three, you can send your envelope by U.S. Mail, alright?" Amen.

It's amazing what they do. It used to be you'd just go in and get a small, medium, or large and put it in there, you know, but now they tailor-make those things for you. I mean just for you. They'll take that out. I don't understand how they do all that but it'll work. My mother-in-law has had both of hers done. A new knee. I know people that have got two new knees, two hips, shoulders, elbows. I just think about that. I mean, at the rapture are you just going to fly apart to other places? How does all that work? Well that's somebody that knows more than I know. Thank God. I'm not in management; I'm in sales. Alright? So God will have to take care of that.

The picture here is that every joint has its work to do. Amen. Some of ya'll hadn't done nothing. It's about time some of ya'll start doing some squats around here.

Every joint has something to do. I started to bring me a skeleton and hang it up here today. I'm a biology minor from college and we used to have a lot of fun with the skeleton that would hang in the biology department. You'd come in one day and he'd have on a wristwatch. You'd come in another day and he'd be smoking. Come at Christmas, he'd have on a Santa hat. He was dead. Somebody else had to do that for him.

Friend, when you're dead, you're just a bag of bones but if you're alive – that's what the church is. We're alive. We do. We're held together with a purpose of carrying the gospel to the end of the earth. That's why we're here. This group over here, they used their voice and their eyes, their hands, and they sing unto the Lord. Some of you go and preach. Some of you use a hammer and you use nails. It's all fit together, together, together, and it's according to the proper working of each individual part. Everybody in this place has got something to do. You have a function. You're to be doing your individual part and all of that together causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. Amen. That's what we are. He just puts us together. It's the picture of the body.

My son-in-law, Brad's father, Buddy, our sweet dear friend has just gone through a stem cell transplant. They tell me that when they do that they take you to the door of death and then turn you around. Buddy's lost weight and just, oh, they just suck all the life out of you and then put life back in. They said, as I talked to him, he told me, "Pastor, the doctor's told me that you're just like a baby again because everything's new and you have to be careful about being around people with cold, influenza, that kind of thing because everything is so sophomoric, so new. Then they said it takes 100 days from the time that you start, it takes 100 days to get back to a maturation." He's at day 55. He's about halfway through.

I got to thinking about that. I know churches that need a stem cell transplant because they're dead. They've got a disease in the bloodline of their church and it's killing them and they're not functioning. A stem cell transplant in New Testament jargon is repentance. It's where you die to the old self and let God bring new life. It doesn't take 100 days, beloved. Our great God can do more in a moment than we can do in a lifetime. You come to Him and He infuses new life into you and you're growing and going forward. That's the way the body is to be. We are to do it – what's that word? – together. We're to do it what? Together. Together. Together.

Well Amen. Jon, where are you? Come on down here. I want you to play a song for me. When Jon plays this song, if you're here today and you want to get saved, I want you just to stand up. Some preachers are so stupid they say, "Stand up right where you are," as if you could stand up somewhere you wasn't. I'm going to ask you to stand up right where you are. Amen. Anybody here want to get saved today? It's your day to get saved. Anybody here supposed to join this church today? It's your day.

You need to make a declaration. Just stand up. Just stand up. Anybody in this early service? You say, "Preacher, I'm embarrassed." I'm not going to embarrass you. We're going to rejoice with you. Anybody here? Find anybody? Alright. Anybody in this service? Then all's well. Everybody's saved and everybody's a member that's here today that ought to be. Is that right? Okay. Somebody stood up in the balcony. Amen. Good. Praise the Lord. Somebody else? Anybody else? Balcony. There they are up in the top. Anybody else? Amen.

Alright, Jon's going to sing and these folks are going to come. If you need to come with them, I'm going to be standing right here. They'll walk right down here and shake my hand in this invitation time. God's call's in this room. Come. Come to unite with Christ. Come to unite with His church. Come being obedient unto the Lord.