

Christian Students Association Bible Study

January 19, 2021

The Living and Responsibility Needed for the Church in the Holy Spirit

The Living and Responsibility Needed in the Body of Christ

The Keeping of the Oneness of the Spirit - Ephesians 4:1-6

1 I beseech you therefore, I, the prisoner in the Lord, to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called,

2 With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, bearing one another in love,

3 Being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace:

4 One Body and one Spirit, even 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.

Note for “prisoner” in verse 1 – The apostle Paul considered himself a prisoner of Christ. Apparently, he was confined in prison; actually, he was imprisoned in Christ. On the basis of such a status, the status in which he actually lived, he besought the saints. . . In beseeching the saints to walk worthily of God’s calling, he used his status as a prisoner of the Lord. His status as an apostle of Christ qualified him to release God’s revelation, whereas his status as a prisoner of the Lord spoke forth his walk in the Lord, by which he could inspire and beseech the saints to walk in the Lord as he did. If we enjoy Christ as our prison, we too will walk in the Lord for the constituting of the church.

In 3:1 Paul speaks of himself as “the prisoner of Christ Jesus,” but here he says that he is “the prisoner in the Lord.” To be a prisoner in the Lord is deeper than to be a prisoner of the Lord. As such a prisoner, Paul is a pattern for those who would walk worthily of God’s calling.

Note for “walk” in verse 1 - This book is divided into two main sections. The first, composed of chaps. 1 — 3, reveals the blessings and the position the church has obtained in Christ in the heavenlies. The second, comprising chaps. 4 — 6, charges us concerning the living and

responsibility the church should have in the Spirit on the earth. The basic charge is that we should walk worthily of God's calling, which is the totality of the blessings bestowed on the church, as revealed in 1:3-14. In the church, under the Triune God's abundant blessing, the saints should walk worthily of the Father's selection and predestination, the Son's redemption, and the Spirit's sealing and pledging. Hence, in chaps. 4 — 6 we see, on the one hand, the living that the church should have, and, on the other hand, the responsibility that the church should bear.

Note for "lowliness" in verse 2 - To be lowly is to remain in a low estate, and to be meek is to not fight for oneself. We should exercise these two virtues in dealing with ourselves. To be long-suffering is to endure mistreatment. We should exercise this virtue in dealing with others. By these virtues we bear (not just tolerate) one another; that is, we do not forsake the troublesome ones but bear them in love. This is the expression of life. These virtues are not found in our natural humanity but are in the humanity of Jesus. The fact that the virtues are mentioned here, before the oneness of the Spirit in v. 3, indicates that we must have these virtues in order to keep the oneness of the Spirit. This implies that in the uniting Spirit there is the transformed humanity, the humanity transformed by the resurrection life of Christ.

Note for "keep" in verse 3 – Or, safeguard, preserve by guarding. The oneness of the Spirit is the Spirit Himself. To keep the oneness of the Spirit is to keep the life-giving Spirit. If we act apart from the Spirit, we are divisive and lose the oneness. If we stay in the life-giving Spirit, we keep the oneness of the Spirit.

Note for "oneness" in verse 3 – To walk worthily of God's calling, to have the proper Body life, we first need to care for the oneness. This is crucial and vital to the Body of Christ. Strictly, oneness differs from unity. Unity is the state in which many people are united together, whereas oneness is the one entity of the Spirit within the believers, which makes them all one. This oneness is a person, Christ Himself, who is the Spirit dwelling within us. It is similar to the electricity flowing within many lamps, making them all one in the shining. In themselves, the lamps are separate, but in the electricity they are one.

Note for "bond of peace" in verse 3 – Christ abolished on the cross all the differences that were due to ordinances. In so doing He made peace for His Body. This peace should bind all believers together and should thus become the uniting bond. The uniting bond of peace is the issue of the working of the cross. When we remain on the cross, we have peace with others. This peace becomes the uniting bond in which we keep the oneness of the Spirit.

Note for "One Body" in verse 4 – In exhorting us to safeguard the oneness, the apostle pointed out seven things that form the base of our oneness: one Body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God. These seven "ones" are of three groups. The first three form the first group, that of the Spirit with the Body as His expression. This Body, having been regenerated and being saturated with the Spirit as its essence, has the hope of being transfigured into the full likeness of Christ. The next three form the second group, that of the

Lord with faith and baptism that we may be joined to Him. The last of the seven forms the third group, the one God and Father, who is the Originator and source of all. The Spirit as the Executor of the Body, the Son as the Creator of the Body, and God the Father as the Originator of the Body — all the three of the Triune God — are related to the Body. The third of the Trinity is the first mentioned in vv. 4-6 because the main concern here is the Body, of which the Spirit is the essence and the life and life supply. The course is then traced back to the Son and to the Father

Note for “Lord” in verse 5 – This verse does not say “one Son,” but “one Lord.” In the Gospel of John it is the Son into whom we believe (John 3:16), but in the Acts it is the Lord into whom we believe (Acts 16:31). In the Epistles of John, the Son is for the imparting of life (1 John 5:12), whereas in the Acts, the Lord, after His ascension, is for the exercising of authority (Acts 2:36), a matter which concerns His headship. Hence, our believing in Him is related to both life and authority, for He is both our life and our Head. As the Head of the Body (1:22), He is the Lord. Christians are divided because they neglect the Head; that is, they neglect the Lord’s headship and authority.

Note for “faith” in verse 5 – Through faith we believe into the Lord (John 3:36), and through baptism we are baptized into Him (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3) and terminated in Adam (Rom. 6:4). Through faith and baptism we have been transferred out of Adam into Christ, thereby being joined to the Lord (1 Cor. 6:17). Immediately after believing in Christ, we should be baptized to complete the transfer.

Note for “God and Father” in verse 6 – God is the Originator of all things, and the Father is the source of life for the Body of Christ.

Note for “over all and through all and in all” in verse 6 – The Trinity is implied even here. *Over all* refers mainly to the Father, *through all* to the Son, and *in all* to the Spirit. The Triune God eventually enters into us all by reaching us as the Spirit. The oneness of the Body of Christ is constituted of the Trinity of the Godhead — the Father as the source and origin being the Originator, the Son as the Lord and Head being the Accomplisher, and the Spirit as the life-giving Spirit being the Executor. The Triune God Himself, when realized and experienced by us in our daily life, is the fundamental basis and very foundation of our oneness.

Discussion Questions

- The Body of Christ exists in oneness. How does oneness differ from unity?
- In his exhortation to keep and guard the oneness, the apostle shows us seven things that form the base of our oneness: what are the seven “ones” and to whom do these seven ones direct us?