

Ephesians 4:4-7
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One Baptism

We're going to get back into the book of Ephesians today. We were in Ephesians chapter four, and we came up to Paul's list of "ones". It starts in Ephesians chapter 4 verse 3 where he talks about how we endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. I'll read it.

Eph 4:3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. **4** *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as 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* above all, and through all, and in you all.

If you'll remember, we started this section talking about the nature of our unity. This unity is not something Paul is telling us to create through any means. This is not agreement in doctrine, getting along in relationships, reconciling all denominations, or anything natural at all. This unity is a many-membered body sharing one Spirit. This is one Life living in one body. Unity is something that God established in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and not something we establish at all. However, it is something that we grow to realize and walk in as we learn and abide in the Life that we have been given.

Very simply, we live and act divided as the body of Christ because we don't know what is real. We live contrary to what God has done because we haven't allowed the Spirit to show us what God has done. Your hand and your foot don't need to create unity. They are already united by virtue of the same life that moves in them both. But unless one mind and one nervous system is functioning rightly, a hand and a foot might feel and act independent of one another. In a natural body, we would call that a disease or illness. In the body of Christ, it is called carnality and spiritual blindness.

For a couple summers during college I worked in the Physical Therapy department of a hospital. I basically helped post-op patients with strengthening exercises and gait training. But sometimes we'd see people that had suffered a major stroke, and we'd help them try to regain control over a part of their body. I don't know if you've ever seen somebody who has suffered a major stroke. Sometimes they lose total control over, and even awareness of, one whole side of their body. And it can be very extreme.

I'll never forget this one time that there was an elderly man laying on one of our exercise beds in the PT department who had had a major stroke. He was laying close to the edge of the bed with an arm hanging off one side, but with his hand still holding on to the edge of the bed (if you can picture that). And this arm was on the side of the body that was effected by the stroke. This guy not only had lost control

of that side of his body, but the stroke had somehow left him often oblivious to the fact that it was even part of him.

So at one point, he was laying on the bed like this and I think he was working on some leg movement and strengthening, and this man looked over to see his own hand grabbing on to the side of his bed...and he screamed "aahhh...there's a man reaching up from under my bed". He actually thought that his arm belonged to somebody else who was sneaking up on him from underneath the bed. I remember being amazed that a stroke could leave somebody so completely unaware of and unattached to a part of his own body.

Well, you've probably jumped ahead of me. That's a true story...but I'm telling it because that is how we act in the body Christ. I can almost imagine Jesus sometimes looking at the church and saying "Aaah...there's some strange hand going to church on Sunday". And the Father saying to Him "No Son, that's just your body". Jesus says "What's it doing?! What's wrong with it?". And the Father says "Well, Son...there's been a malfunction. It shares your life, but not your mind".

The natural mind is not unlike a giant stroke. We operate in disunity and constant conflict in the flesh because we relate in the flesh. And we relate in the flesh because we want to live in the flesh. In fact, so many remain unaware that there even is such a thing as sharing one life, relating in that life, living by that Spirit, walking by that Spirit.

Unity is what God has done through the resurrection of Christ. He brings us into one death, and raises us into one Spirit. And now, growth and life and fellowship and unity is learning to live by and walk in that Spirit as God reveals His Son in you.

We then spent a few weeks on the reality of one faith and one hope or expectation. It is *because* we are one body sharing one Spirit that we are brought by that Spirit to one faith. The one faith is the one mind of Christ. It is one Son known by one light. One view, awareness, truth, understanding, that works in the body, and joins us together in one mind and one judgment. Many members, but one faith, one mind, working in all of them.

In the elderly man I just mentioned, one faith, or one mind, is precisely what he needed. He had the right amount of body parts. He had plenty of life working in each limb. But he didn't have one mind governing each limb. He had several body parts that were working contrary to the one mind, so much so that they could even frighten the one mind. That's a problem. But when there is one life in one body, it is clear that in order to function rightly the many members must not only share one life, they must also live and move by one mind.

So we, who are one in Christ, must have the mind of Christ. We must, by the work of the Spirit of God in revealing Christ, come to one faith. We must learn Him. Not learn about Him, but learn Him...so that in Him and by Him we come to know and will and understand. And we are conformed to Him, and constrained by Him. Not as soul-less puppets, but as those in whom "He wills and works for His own good pleasure." (Phil 3:12)

And then we talked about how that one Spirit, working in one body, that brings us to one faith, gives rise to one expectation that works in us. And here is where I got sidetracked for a few weeks talking about all of the expectations that work in us that

are less than, and contrary to, God's ONE expectation. We, as limbs that work apart from the Head, project our own expectations on Him and then live with the confusion and disappointment of Him "letting us down".

But the Head has an expectation for His own body. The Life of God must work in us by faith according to God's expectation, God's eternal plan and purpose. And that is altogether different and indescribably better than our own ideas. True faith works in us a hope, or expectation. And when that expectation conceives it is called love. If you try to find love without faith and expectation, you're going to find something far less than the love of God. You're going to find a natural version of a purely supernatural thing.

All of that was something of a review of where we've been with Paul's list of "one's". One Spirit, one body, one faith etc. But that list continues. So we're going to move on into verse 5 where he also mentions one Lord, and one baptism, and then goes on to describe the one God and Father who is over all, through all, and in you all. Before we get into the one baptism, let me say just a few things about one Lord and Father.

I can't say that I have a solid grasp on Paul's understanding of the Trinity. But there are a few things I have seen, and so I'll share just a bit. Without question, the New Testament describes something like what we call the Trinity. The reason I say "something like" is simply because the Bible never says that word. The word "trinity" is a word that we use to talk about God in the way the Bible describes. And I think it's a good word. I think it fits the bill as much as a word can.

I remember one time in college when a person was trying to persuade me that Jesus wasn't divine based on the fact that the Father is generally referred to as God in the New Testament. Jesus, is generally referred to as Lord. His arguments were weak and easily argued even with a totally natural mind, but I remember it leaving a question in my mind as to why that was the case. Why was the Father generally called God and Jesus called Lord. There are a few exceptions, but not many. It was years before the reason for this started coming into a bit of focus.

Though Father, Son, and Spirit are indeed One, they share one life, and all three are clearly divine...when I began to understand more of salvation, I started to see that the differences in the Godhead weren't in nature or kind or purpose, but really had much more to do with their role and position in salvation. In other words, our salvation is an encounter and an experience with Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It involves a dynamic relatedness to all three Persons of the one God.

I want to be careful how I talk about this because these things are largely beyond words and easily misunderstood. As a person that came from a more charismatic background, I encountered a lot of weird ideas about relating to the tri-unity of God. Even somewhat recently, as I was describing something of the work of Christ to an individual, they stopped me and said "you know, it sounds like you have a pretty good relationship with Jesus, but what about your relationship to the Father." I hope you know that that makes absolutely no sense. I won't spend time picking that statement apart, but I mention it because that is not at all what I meant when I said that our salvation involves a dynamic relatedness to all three Persons of the one God.

What I meant is that salvation is enormous. It is simple, and yet it is huge. It involves being reconciled to God, brought back to Him in true relationship and

covenant. This is an encounter with the Fatherhood of God. It involves God actually crucifying you to Adam, making you dead to the world, dead to sin. This is an encounter with the Son of God. It involves God's truth working in your soul, His Light shining in your heart, His mind teaching you all things. This is an encounter with the Spirit of God. Not three God's, but an experience of the three-ness of God in an incredible salvation.

It involves being adopted, brought into a position of full inheritance, brought into the Father's house. This is an experience with the Father. It involves being made alive, united in Spirit, raised up and seated in the heavens. This is an experience of the Son. It involves ministering the presence and person of God through the church to those in the earth in gifts and ministries. This is an experience of the Holy Spirit.

Do you see? They are not three different Gods by any means. And yet, your salvation is without question an incredible experience and knowledge of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All of this is yours **through** Christ. You have been joined to Him, and so He is the husband of the bride. He is the head of His body. He is the king of His kingdom. He is the captain of your salvation. The ruler of His household. And so He is most often referred to as "Lord". That is how he functions in relation to you. That is how you come to know Him, as you grow up to say "nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me". "Not I, but the one who mightily works in me". "every thought is being taken captive to the obedience of Christ". We come to know the Son as our Lord.

And yet, the Son has proceeded forth and come from the Father. The Father plans and purposes salvation, the Son accomplished salvation, the Spirit reveals salvation. But all things have their origin in the Father. He is the fountainhead. He is over all. And in being joined to Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection He has become *your* Father. Rom 8:15 - "but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,"

He has become your God. You have been reconciled to Him. You have entered into covenant with Him. Jesus says in John 17 that He, in fact, makes his home in you. You have entered into a relationship with Him through Christ where, as Hebrews 11:16 and elsewhere says, He is not ashamed to be called your God. You have come through Christ unto God. "You have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God". Salvation is an encounter with God the Father.

And though this doesn't explain every occurrence of these words in the New Testament, I think it gives a basic framework for seeing the hugeness of our salvation as an experience of a triune God. Ephesians 2:18 says this "for through Him [Christ] we both have access by one Spirit to the Father." So our boast as Christians is not just that we have our sins forgiven by God. Our boast, at the very least, is that we have been born of the one Spirit, united to the one Son, and made to live in the one Father.

But lets move on to look at this term "one baptism". What is the one baptism mentioned here? Hopefully it is obvious to us, but Paul is not talking about a single ordinance of baptism. Or saying that "as Christians, we only have one way to baptize people". The ordinance of baptism only exists because it is an outward demonstration and celebration of true baptism. We are baptized into one Spirit. We are baptized into Christ. And first of all, we are baptized into His death.

This is what water baptism is supposed to illustrate. We are put down into the death of the Lord. Utterly submerged into His death. Dunked into His judgment. Water, in the types and shadows of the Old Testament, is almost always speaking of death and judgment. Rivers of living water obviously represent the Spirit. But great waters, deep waters, waves, seas...always refer to death and judgment.

There was water that destroyed the earth and judged the adamic man in the flood. A whole world destroyed by water. Then there is the water that the Israelites passed through on their way out of Egypt. The Red Sea that killed the entire army of Pharaoh. Even Paul refers to this as a picture of our baptism into Christ's death in 1 Corinthians chapter 10. Paul speaks of being "baptized into the Sea". Then there is the water into which Jonah was submerged in the belly of the whale for three days and three nights. This too, Jesus Himself, shows us speaks of death and the judgment of the cross. He says

Mat 12:40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

There is the water that was stopped up at the Jordon as the Children of Israel passed through. Death conquered and stopped, as Joshua leads the people onto resurrection ground. Water is used to describe death and judgment in the Psalms. David, speaking by the Spirit, and pointing to Christ says in Psalm 42 "All of your waves and billows have gone over me". In Psalm 69 "save me O God, for the waters have threatened my life...I have come into deep waters, and a flood overflows me". Psalm 88 "You have put me in the lowest pit, in dark places, in the depths. Your wrath has rested upon me, and you have afflicted me with all of your waves"

There is an interesting reference in the book of Revelation to the New Creation. John says of this creation that there is no longer any sea. No longer any death or judgment.

We, who come to live by His Spirit, *are first baptized into His death*. We who come to live on the dry ground, are first drowned in the depths of the sea. This is the picture of baptism. We are put down into His death, and raised with Him in the newness of resurrection Life.

And this is precisely what Jesus says in John chapter 3. Do you remember what Christ said to Nicodemus when he asked about the kingdom of God.

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." 4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Do you see what Jesus is bringing into view? He's showing you that we, who come to live by His Spirit, are first baptized into His death. This is the "one baptism" that we have come to in Christ.

Rom 6:3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?4 Therefore we were buried with Him

through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Col 2:12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with *Him* through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

1Co 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

A few weeks ago I read to you from a book I was reading on the Tabernacle by a man born in 1805 named Henry Soltau. The book, for those interested is called "The Holy Vessels and Furniture of the Tabernacle". And I've just been really refreshed by what this man has to say. The last time I quoted from this book it was a paragraph about how the order of salvation is heaven first, and then earth. First we are raised with Him out from death, and made to sit in Christ in the heavens. And then the heavenly life, reality, and relationship are made manifest in the earth.

Well, in this same book there is an outstanding paragraph on baptism that I'd like to read. Its no different than what I've been saying, but it is stated so clearly. And so, in the mouth of two or three witnesses let everything be established. Henry Soltau writes:

"It is not only Christ, but Christ *crucified* that must be known, if the sinner would be cleansed and have everlasting life. Here the fountain of life is combined with the cleansing waters of death and judgment. Baptism is a type of these two things – death and resurrection – judgment and life – salvation, but salvation through destruction. The believer, plunged beneath those waters, has vividly set before him the reality that he has been buried with Christ into death, and that he owes his cleanness, and consequent life and fitness for God's presence, to the blessed fact of his having been judged in Christ crucified, and has thereby 'suffered in the flesh and ceased from sin' (1 Pet 4:1) Washing and burial are thus combined, for God's mode of washing the sinner is through death – the death of His Son; out of whose grave, as typified by the waters of baptism, the believer has been raised, quickened into new life, made clean every whit, and brought into the family of God"... [Baptism is a] type, not of the washing away of the filth of the flesh, but of the destruction, in judgment, of the *flesh itself*; at the same time there results the answer of a good conscience toward God, because the old man has been destroyed, and a new and holy life imparted, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

Why are there so few books like this?

So, the "one baptism" that Paul is referring to is this one. It is the spiritual reality of which the natural shadow testifies. It is partaking of His death in order to be made of His resurrection. But you must not fail to comprehend that the end comes before the beginning. You can't just quote John chapter three and say "you must be born of Spirit". No, you must be "born of water and of Spirit". It is essential.

Jesus is always careful to mention both. He does this same thing in John chapter 6 when He describes eternal life to a crowd. He says, "unless you eat my flesh *and* drink my blood, you have no life in your self." "He who eats my flesh and drinks my

blood has eternal life". In my understanding, this is exactly the same thing, but different words. Eating his flesh, is partaking of His death. It is union with Christ in the destruction of His flesh. It is judgment. Drinking his blood is coming to live by His life, to live by the New Covenant, to come with Him back to the right hand of God almighty.

In the Old Testament, the life was in the blood. The flesh was destroyed at the altar. Burned and consumed, never to enter the Holy of Holies. Only the blood went in. The blood went in and was sprinkled on the Mercy Seat. We partake of His flesh, his death. We bear that judgment. And then we live by that blood. We eat this bread, and drink this wine.

In Genesis chapter 40, Joseph was in a dungeon with two guys. One of them was bread, the other was wine. One was a baker, the other was a cup bearer. Both of them had dreams involving a judgment in three days. This is similar to what Christ said about Jonah, and his three days. At the end of three days in the dungeon with Joseph, something happened to the bread maker, and something happened to the cup bearer. The bread maker was hung up on a tree, and killed. A clear and appropriate picture of the judgment of God poured out on the body of Jesus Christ. The cup bearer, however, was raised up and restored to the right hand of Pharaoh.

The picture is unmistakable here. Eat my flesh, drink my blood. Born of water, and of Spirit. Baptized into death, brought forth in the resurrection. This is our one baptism. The one baptism that Paul describes in Ephesians chapter 4 verse 5. Amen.