

Introduction/Recap

In last month's sermon we reached the half way point of Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians and started the second half by looking at **4:1-3**. In those verses Paul gave advice on how we should live as believers in Jesus Christ. He also mentioned the need for unity in the Spirit; that is, the Holy Spirit. We need to understand that coming to faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour is merely the beginning of a journey and we have to learn how to behave as we make that journey. When we come to faith in Christ our lives are changed dramatically and as a result our behaviour should also change. Guidance on our behaviour forms the bulk of **4:1-3** together with that thought of our being united by and in the Holy Spirit.

In the next three verses, **4:4-6**, Paul provides further teaching by reminding us that there is only one God, only one Lord and only one Holy Spirit. This Holy Trinity forms a vital part of our faith in Christ and we need to understand the role of each member of this Trinity as we grow in our faith.

Calling & Hope

Before we move on to consider the roles of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ and God our heavenly Father in the unity that Paul speaks of, I want us to look at Paul's thoughts on our calling and hope which are mentioned almost as an interjection in **4:4**.

Calling is referred to in a number of places in Scripture and forms an important part of our lives as believers and in our daily walk with Christ. Many normally associate the thought of someone being called with being a Minister or Pastor who becomes God's servant in caring for a church. Whilst that is true and extremely important, it is not the only aspect of calling that applies to us as believers. We can see from Scripture that we are called to salvation and consequently called to be members of God's family. Earlier in **1:4-5** we learned that God had chosen us to be members of His family long before the world began. Paul told the Ephesians: *"For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will"*. Paul expanded on that thought in **Romans 8:28-30** when he wrote: *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified."* God called us after we had been predestined to receive salvation and be in His family. That word *"predestined"* may be a bit off-putting since we don't hear it very often. However, it simply means that because God loves us He chose us before time began to be part of His family. This comes about because of Jesus' sacrificial act in dying on the cross to pay for our sins and was always part of God's eternal plan; a plan which includes our being called, forgiven our sins and glorified as His children. That thought in **Romans 8:30** of our being *"justified"* means that we have been forgiven our sins since the penalty for those sins has been paid by Christ on the cross.

Not only have we been called to salvation but here in **4:4** Paul tells us we have also been *"called to one hope"*. We all have hopes don't we. Sadly many of those hopes are forlorn and never come to fruition. Just think about that for a moment. Many want to win the lottery; they hope their football team will win something; they want to live in a big house with fine

furnishings. Those are some of the usual material things that the world desires and needless to say such hopes are rarely satisfied. However, the hope that Paul is talking about here is different since it will come to fruition. Paul had earlier said in **2:12 (NLT)** that non-believers were “*were living apart from Christ*” and “*lived in this world without God and without hope*”. Francis spoke to us recently about Abraham and his great faith in God¹. In **Romans 4:18** Paul reminds us that Abraham had great hope; Paul wrote: “*Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations ...*” For Christians hope and faith go hand in hand and here in **4:4** Paul reminds us we are called to “*one hope*” and for a Christian this is definitely not a forlorn hope but an assurance that what we hope for is real. The writer to the Hebrews tells us: “*Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*” (**Hebrews 11:1**) whilst Paul adds in **Romans 5:3-5**: “*we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.*” That one hope to which Christians have been called can be found only in Jesus Christ. This hope is not a forlorn hope but is comprehensive since for Christians this hope carries with it the thought of our finally sharing with Christ in His glory. In Paul’s prayer in **Ephesians 1** we read: “*I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints ...*” (**1:18**) This hope is so real that it is ready and waiting for us just as Paul told the believers in Colossae that it “*is stored up for you in heaven*” (**Colossians 1:5**). Peter tells us that we should set our “*hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed*” (**1 Peter 1:13**).

One Spirit

Paul begins **4:4** by boldly stating that there is one body and one Holy Spirit. In this context we need to understand that the body means the church since the true church is the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit is given to all believers as they come to faith in Christ. He will be with us until Christ returns and will work in us and teach us every day how we should live as Christians. We receive the gift of the Holy Spirit the very instant we come to faith in Christ; there is no waiting, no filling in application forms, no sending money; we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit in our hearts the very moment we repent of our sins and accept Christ as our Lord and Saviour. When that happens we also become members of the body of Christ; that is the church. This membership is of the universal church and should not be confused with becoming a member of a local fellowship such as KNBC. Whilst membership of the universal church is automatic and happens at the moment we come to faith in Christ, membership of a local fellowship is optional but vital if we want to grow in our faith in Christ. Membership of a local fellowship such as KNBC is an important commitment to be in a relationship with other believers in which everyone agrees to walk together as disciples of Christ; grow together in their faith; help one another to mature in Christ; worship and serve together in mission; enjoy fellowship together and gather together for prayer and Bible Study. By doing that we will simply be emulating the activities of the early church that are described in **Acts 2:42-47** where we read amongst other things that “*all the believers were together ...*” (**Acts 2:44a**). However, I’ll remind you that Paul is talking here in **4:4** of the universal church that is formed as the body of Christ where all believers become members the moment they believe. This church is not a man-made institution but rather a body brought about by the Holy Spirit. As Paul makes clear in his Epistles to the Galatians and to

¹ Williamson, Francis, *When God tests your faith what does He find?*, KNBC, 16 Jul 2023

the Corinthians this church truly is universal. When writing to the Galatians he told them: *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male no female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus"* (**Galatians 3:28**). Similarly when writing to the Corinthians he told them: *"For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink."* (**1 Corinthians 12:13**). Those references to *"neither Jew nor Greek"* should be seen as referring to the breaking down of racial barriers; in fact any barriers that may have existed between people have been removed by Christ on the cross and as a result of that everyone coming to faith in Him becomes part of the church. All believers become members of Christ's church regardless of race, colour or creed. The Holy Spirit is both the founding and the unifying force behind this body and as I mentioned earlier He is with us permanently and will remain so until Christ returns. Without the unifying involvement of the Holy Spirit the church would most certainly not exist; as a result whilst man-made denominations may come and go Christ's universal church will continue and thrive until He comes again.

One Lord

As we come to **4:5** Paul reminds us that there is only one Lord and that is Jesus Christ Himself. Cults may come and go whilst their human leaders have a tendency to be shown as charlatans with no scruples. Jesus is the Son of God and whilst Isaiah tells us *"... he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth"* (**Isaiah 53:9**) *"... he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors"* (**Isaiah 53:12**) and died on the cross of Calvary. When teaching His disciples Jesus told them that whilst He would be killed He would be raised to life again. He told them: *"that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."* (**Matthew 16:21**). Jesus kept that promise having paid the price of the sins for all those who repented and came to faith in Him as Lord and Saviour. No other religious leader has ever done that and never will simply because only Jesus Christ has the power to achieve that. As our Lord He is the One around Whom we unite; it is the Holy Spirit Who binds us together here on earth although Christ is at the centre.

When Peter appeared before the Sanhedrin to answer questions about his activities the Apostle said to them *"It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He is 'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.' Salvation is found in no-one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."* (**Acts 4:10-12**). Similarly when writing to the Romans Paul told them: *"... there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' "* (**Romans 10:12-13**). Jesus is the only One we need for salvation and not only is Jesus Christ the same Lord for both Jews and Gentiles but He is also the only Lord; the only Son of God and the only One Who can bring salvation to those who repent. The Commentator William Hendriksen sums it up this way: *"He is our Lord in the sense that since He bought us we are His. He owns us, loves us, cares for us, and protects us. We recognise His sovereignty, own Him as our Deliverer and Ruler, trust, obey, love, and worship Him."*²

² Hendriksen, William, *New Testament Commentary - Ephesians*, Banner of Truth, Edinburgh: 1967, page 186

One in Christ

Paul also mentions “*one faith*” and this thought of faith can be seen in two ways. Firstly, it may be seen as the faith that an individual has when they accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. That is a personal faith and is vital to our salvation.

Secondly, and equally importantly, is the Christian faith itself; that is the doctrine and teachings that we should follow as believers in Christ. We learn the details of that faith from God’s Word: Scripture. That Word contains all that we need to know about Jesus and the gospel that He proclaimed. Although Paul doesn’t mention it there is only one Holy book and that is the Bible; God’s Word which contains the 66 books of the Canon. It is only from this book and with the help of the Holy Spirit that we can learn about Jesus and all that He has done, and is still doing for us. When writing to the Philippians Paul urged them to live lives worthy of the faith that they followed. He wrote to them and said: “*Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel*” (Philippians 1:27). Paul had been called by God to take the gospel to the Gentiles and he knew what their reaction would be which is why he appreciated the Gentiles’ amazement that he was “*The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.*” (Galatians 1:23). Despite people denying the Bible and claiming it is outdated and meaningless and others saying that there are other holy books, there is no other book that can teach us about Christ and lead us to a deeper understanding of the faith of which we are part of and to which we belong.

Finally in 4:5 we read that there is “*one baptism*”. Some may suggest that this refers to the baptism of the Holy Spirit which all Christians experience when they come to faith in Christ. However, in this instance the baptism Paul is talking about here is the baptism of believers in water. This baptism by immersion in water is a public declaration of an individual’s faith in Jesus Christ. Importantly when someone goes through the waters of baptism they are baptised in the name of Jesus Christ and not in the name of the church or the name of the Pastor but in the name of their Saviour. Although it is not explicitly stated here this baptism can be taken as meaning baptism of adult believers by immersion in water and it is important to understand that this act doesn’t in and of itself bring faith or repentance but rather it is that outward public declaration of that faith and repentance. It is true to say that many have however said that it has strengthened their faith and helped them to feel closer to Christ. Whilst the act of baptism is not mandatory, it is an act of obedience to follow Christ and it is that public declaration of someone’s faith that is important.

One Father

Just as 4:4 is about the Holy Spirit and 4:5 about Jesus Christ so 4:6 is about the one true God and loving heavenly Father. Without doing so directly Paul is talking in these verses, 4:4-6, of the Holy Trinity; that is, Father, Son and Holy Spirit as the three in One God something which isn’t easy to understand. There is no mention in Scripture as such of the Holy Trinity. However Matthew links them together in Matthew 28:19 when he quotes Jesus’ words of the Great Commission: “*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*”. The implication here is that they are not three separate entities but one true God.

There were many cults in existence when Paul wrote these words just as there are many cults in existence today and they all worship different gods. However, Christians know and

Scripture tells us that there is only one Father and we know from **Genesis** that He is the Creator and Father all who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. We've already seen Paul's comment in **3:9** that God "*created all things*" and now he tells us that He is "*over all*", in other words He is supreme, transcendent and the ruler of all creation. That word "*transcendent*" may not be easy for us to understand. My ever reliable Concise Oxford Dictionary tells me that it carries the meaning of something being beyond normal human experience. That describes God very well since He exists apart from the normal limitations of the material universe and so is not subject to those limitations. Let's face it, He created everything and so He sets the rules! Not only that but He is in everything since He created it and whilst we can't see God as such, if we open our eyes and our hearts we will see Him as we gaze upon His glorious creation. For instance, just look at the different trees that we see everywhere and think about how they came to be; look at the night sky and see the stars. Whilst we can't see them all with the naked eye Scripture tells us that God created them all and knows them by name. Those are just two simple examples of how we can "see" God and know not only that He exists but He is the only God. We should also never forget that not only is He our Father in heaven but He is also the Father of our Saviour Jesus. When writing to the Corinthians Paul discussed the issue of eating food that had been offered to idols; he told them "*... for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.*" (**1 Corinthians 8:6**).

Scripture makes it very clear that there is only one God and Father of all. At the beginning of his prayer in **3:14-19** Paul tells us: "*For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name.*" (**3:14-15**). I read that as meaning that since I am a member of His family God is my Father.

Conclusion

Paul was up against false teachers wherever he went and he worked hard to combat all they had to say and teach. Given that Paul's main ministry was to Gentiles it was important to teach and demonstrate that there wasn't one Lord for Jews and one Lord for Gentiles; there is only one Lord just as there is only one Holy Spirit and one Father in heaven. Regardless of background or any other potential differences all believers come to faith in the one same Jesus Christ and receive the gift of the one same Holy Spirit, both of Whom come from the one Father in heaven.

Do you believe that? Do you know the one Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour? If not then I suggest you open your hearts and minds and seek His forgiveness by asking Him into your lives then you really will know the truth of these verses.