

## EPHESIANS 4:1-7

There are many kinds of unity...when you think of *unity*, what things come to your mind? What kinds of things can you be united with or to? We can have unity of purpose – if we share a common goal, we are united in achieving that goal. We can have unity of thought – if we think the same about an issue, we are united in our understanding of that issue.

But even though we may have unity in one or many areas, we may not always have unity in how those areas affect our lives. For example, we may be united in our goal of eradicating poverty, we may try to achieve those goals in different ways – one may advance a solution whereby money is taken from the rich and given to the poor while another may advance a solution whereby it is made easier for the underprivileged to get and maintain employment.

Even though there is *unity* regarding something being a problem, there is great *disunity* regarding proposed solutions to that problem.

Think of someone close to you. Think of ways you are united to that person. Think of ways you have disunity with that person.

In this chapter of Ephesians, Paul is building on what he has taught up to this point to exhort his readers to understand a certain kind of unity. But as always, Paul does not just teach with the goal of simple understanding, no, he teaches with the goal of changed lives, changes worldviews, changed actions.

He wants knowledge to lead to real change.

It's not an accident that he precedes this teaching with an exhortation to pray for spiritual strength – it's almost as if Paul thinks that not all of his readers will accept the fact that, in Christ, they are all united in a very real and unbreakable way.

As are all of you who are *in Christ*.

1. Paul begins this chapter with another *therefore*.
  - a. What does he want you to be thinking about as you begin? (what was he talking about prior to this?)
  - b. Why is that important?
2. Then, he calls himself a prisoner *for* the Lord.
  - a. Define *prisoner*.
  - b. What can prisoners do? What can't they do?
  - c. Notice that Paul says He is a prisoner *for* the Lord, not *of* the Lord.
    - i. Where do you suppose Paul was when he wrote Ephesians?
    - ii. Read the following passages:
      1. Romans 1:1-6
      2. 2 Timothy 1:8-12
      3. Philemon 1:23-24
      4. In these passages, does Paul call himself a prisoner/slave/servant *for* Jesus or a prisoner/slave/servant *to/of* Jesus?
    - iii. Read the following passages:
      1. Ephesians 3:1-3
      2. Philemon 1:1-3

3. Philemon 1:8-10
4. In these passages, does Paul call himself a prisoner/slave/servant *for* Jesus or a prisoner/slave/servant *to/of* Jesus?
  - iv. In some letters, including Ephesians, Paul refers to himself as both a prisoner *for* Jesus and a prisoner *of* Jesus. Given what you know about prisoners, what does that tell you about the relationship between Jesus and His people?
- d. Read the following passages
  - i. John 8:31-38
  - ii. 2 Corinthians 3:12-18
  - iii. Galatians 2:4-5
  - iv. Galatians 5:1-6
  - v. Galatians 5:13-15
  - vi. Romans 6:15-19
- e. When the bible talks about freedom, what does it say we are freed from?
- f. What does it say we are freed to be? (see Romans 6:18)
- g. How in the world does that make sense?
- h. Christians are always prisoners *of* Jesus. Some Christians are called to be prisoners *for* Jesus. Does it now make sense that Paul has preceded this section with a call to pray for spiritual strength?
3. Still in verse 1, after Paul calls himself a prisoner, he urges his readers to do something
  - a. Define “urge”. What does Paul *urge* his readers to do?
  - b. The Greek word used here is sometimes translated as “implore”, “beg”, “appeal”, “plead”, etc. Given that, do you think that Paul thinks this is a big deal?
  - c. Why does Paul think it important to mention that he is a prisoner *for* Christ before he makes this plea?
4. In verse 2, Paul mentions some things that flow out of us because of our calling.
  - a. What are those things? Define them.
  - b. Is your life marked by those things?
  - c. Would people who know you use those words to describe you?
  - d. What do you need in your life to make those words even more descriptive of you?
5. In verse 3, Paul says that we should be *eager*
  - a. What should we be eager to do?
  - b. We need to be careful with a verse like this, why? What could be some wrong application of this truth? Read the following passages for context
    - i. Jeremiah 6:13-15
    - ii. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6
    - iii. Philippians 2:1-11
  - c. Think of something that Paul is *not* saying about unity and peace?
  - d. What are we as Christians to be united around?
    - i. John 17:17-19
  - e. What is “the unity of the Spirit”?
    - i. John 4:21-24
    - ii. John 16:4-15
  - f. What does “in the bond of peace” refer to?
    - i. Ephesians 2:14-15
6. In verses 4-6, after talking about unity and peace, Paul explains why
  - a. ... there is one body ... what is this body? (1 Corinthians 12:12-16)

- b. ... one Spirit ... what is this Spirit? (1 Corinthians 12:1-11; John 15:26-27)
  - c. ... called to one hope ... what is this one hope? (Romans 5:3-8; I Thessalonians 5:8-9)
  - d. ... one Lord ... who is this one Lord? (1 Corinthians 8:4-6)
  - e. ... one faith ... what is this one faith? (Jude 1:3-4)
  - f. ... one baptism ... what is this one baptism? (Romans 6:1-11)
  - g. ... one God and Father of us all ... who is this one God? (Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Timothy 1:17) How does Paul describe Him here?
7. Finally, in verse 7, Paul talks about grace
- a. Define grace.
  - b. Who is the “us”?
  - c. What is the basis of this grace given to us?
  - d. What is Christ’s gift?

Paul starts out chapter 4 by pleading with his readers to be united. But this unity is based in peace, in grace, in truth, and ultimately, in God. One warning...

**2 Corinthians 6:14–18 (14)** *Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? (15) What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? (16) What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (17) Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, (18) and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.” (ESV)*

There is no unity between light and darkness...there is no peace there. Sometimes we claim “peace” when there is no peace. Sometimes, in order to seek what we think is peace, we do not confront error with truth. Sometimes, we think that the best way to keep peace is to mold ourselves to the world and keep quiet about sin.

But that is not at all what Paul is pleading with us to do.

Paul expects everyone who calls themselves a Christian to call everyone to repent...to preach the gospel. The same Paul that wrote this paragraph also pleaded with his fellow Jews to repent and turn from their lie and believe the truth...believe the gospel. He wept over them and confronted them in love in the bond of peace *with Jesus*. Paul was bonded to Jesus, his only peace. He wanted to be united with the Jewish people, but he knew that no unity could exist as long as he was “of the light” and they were “of the dark.”

And he also knew that he could not bring them out of the kingdom of darkness. And he didn’t try.

He pointed them and us to Jesus, and he went to prison for it and was ultimately killed for it.

But that didn’t stop him. He knew his calling, he knew the grace that was extended to him, he knew his responsibility to preach Christ and Him crucified.

He knew the “one hope” that belonged to his call.

Do you know your hope? Do you know your call?

Do you know the unity you have with others who share your hope?