

PRESERVE AND PROTECT OUR UNITY; EPH. 4:3-6 (Ed O'Leary)

INTRODUCTION.

IN EPH. 4:1, ~ PAUL TELLS US, ~ ¶¶

▶▶ "As a result of all that God has done for and given you, ~ the truth of our great salvation and its accompanying blessings ~ spelled out in the first three chapters of this letter, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ I, ~ a prisoner of the Lord, ~ urge you to apply or display this truth by living in a way that brings honor and glory to Him."

↪↪ TPID my fellow believers, ~ as a result of what God has done for and given us, ~ we are to honor and glorify Him in our thoughts, ~ words, ~ and behavior.

▶▶ And then from 4:2 — 6:9, ~ Paul spells out in detail the type of life that brings honor and glory to God, ~ the type of life that should result from the truth of chapters 1-3.

▶▶ Last time, ~ along with vs. 1, ~ we examined vs. 2, ~ and 4 attitudes believers are to have toward one another that bring honor and glory to God ~ and display the truth of chapters 1-3.

TODAY, ~ WE WILL TAKE UP 4:3-6. ~~ PRAY BEFORE

TO SET THE CONTEXT, ~ LET'S DO A BRIEF OVERVIEW.

▶▶ In Eph. 4:3a, ~ Paul calls us to be "eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit." ~~ This is his main point in these verses.

▷▷ Maintaining "the unity of the Spirit," ~ Paul shows us, ~ is behavior that should result from our great salvation and its accompanying blessings.

↪↪ It is behavior that honors and glorifies God ~ and displays the truth of chaps. 1-3.

▶▶ In verse 3b, ~ Paul gives us a way "to maintain the unity of the Spirit." ~~ "in the bond of peace."

▶▶ And then in verses 4-6, ~ Paul tells us why we should "maintain the unity of the Spirit," ~ beyond the fact that it's something that should result from what God has done for & given us.

▷▷ "4 There is one body and one Spirit — just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call — 5 one Lord, ~ one faith, ~ one baptism, ~ 6 one God and Father of all, ~ who is over all and through all and in all." ¶¶ 1/9

NOW LET'S LOOK CAREFULLY AT VERSE 3a, ~ PAUL'S MAIN POINT.

PAUL CALLS BELIEVERS TO BE "EAGER TO MAINTAIN THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT." ~~

Verse as a baseline.

▶▶ "eager" means "make every effort."

▷▷ So, ~ here in **verse 3a**, ~ Paul is saying, ~ "make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit."

▶▶ Furthermore, ~ "eager" suggests that maintaining "the unity of the Spirit" ~ is to be a matter of the utmost importance and urgency.

▷▷ So, ~ basically in **verse 3a**, ~ Paul tells us, ~ those who have . . . ~ "Make it a priority ~ to make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit."

▶▶ Although we might expect Paul to encourage believers to strive to achieve unity in the church, ~ he actually calls us to maintain a unity that already exists.

▷▷ "maintain" essentially means ~ to preserve and protect what is already in existence.

↳↳ Basically, ~ to build on **verse 3a**, ~ Paul is saying, ~ "Make it a priority ~ to make every effort to preserve and protect the unity of the Spirit that you already have in your possession."

▶▶ What's more, ~ the Greek grammar Paul uses shows that this is a continuous thing he is insisting that believers do.

▷▷ To once again build on **verse 3a**, ~ Paul says, ~ "Make it a priority ~ to continually ~ make every effort to preserve and protect the unity of the Spirit that you already have in your possession."

▶▶ And the phrase "the unity of the Spirit" here means "the unity from the Spirit." ~~ "Spirit," ~ of course, ~ refers to God the Holy Spirit.

▷▷ So, ~ Paul is talking about a unity that the Holy Spirit has given believers.

↳↳ To once more build on **verse 3a**, ~ Paul says to Jesus' blood-bought disciples, ~ "Make it a priority ~ to continually ~ make every effort to preserve and protect the unity that the Holy Spirit has given you."

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS JOINED BELIEVERS TOGETHER TO FORM ONE UNIT, ~ THE one church. ↴↴ 2/9

▶▶ When we are saved, ~ He does not divide us into individual separate entities, ~ each doing our own thing.

↳↳ We are all different parts of one unit, ~ one whole. ~ He has united us into one new class of humanity, ~ the church, ~ the one body of Christ.

▷▷ In 1 Cor. 12:12-13, ~ Paul writes, ~ NASB ~ "For even as the body is one and yet has many members, ~ and all the members of the body, ~ though they are many, ~ are one body, ~ so also is Christ. ~ ~ ¶¶

↳↳ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, ~ whether Jews or Greeks, ~ whether slaves or free, ~ and we were all made to drink of one Spirit [i.e., ~ and we all share one Holy Spirit]."

AND HERE IN EPH. 4:3a, ~ PAUL INSISTS THAT BELIEVERS ARE TO MAKE IT A PRIORITY ~ to continually make every effort ~ ¶¶

▶▶ to preserve and protect this unity that the Holy Spirit has given us.

▶▶ My brothers and sisters in Christ, ~ we have a great responsibility.

▷▷ The unity we enjoy is a precious gift from the Holy Spirit that can be easily wrecked. ~ E.g., ~ bickering, ~ factions, ~ and dissensions could wreck it.

▷▷ Each one of us here at NHCC must make it a priority ~ to continually ~ make every effort to preserve and protect this unity that God the Holy Spirit has given us.

▶▶ In fact, ~ elsewhere Paul sounds a warning showing the seriousness of this matter.

▷▷ It's in the setting of sin in a local fellowship, ~ the church at Corinth, ~ but applies equally as well to preserving and protecting our unity.

↳↳ In 1 Cor. 3:16-17, ~ speaking of the church in the context, ~ and not individual believers, ~ Paul writes, ~ ¶¶

→→ "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? ~ If anyone destroys God's temple, ~ God will destroy him. ~ For God's temple is holy, ~ and you are that temple."

▷▷ So God takes the matter of destroying the church very seriously.

↳↳ And not preserving and protecting "the unity of the Spirit" will destroy a local fellowship. ~ Seriousness ¶¶ 3/9

▶▶I would like to say that I think everyone here at NHCC does an excellent job in preserving and protecting our unity.

▷▷But we must never let our guard down. ~ We must always be vigilant.

↳↳As Peter warns us in 1 Pet. 5:8, ~ "Be sober-minded; ~ be watchful. ~ Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, ~ seeking someone to devour."

→→So let us recommit ourselves today ~ to make it a priority ~ to continually make every effort ~ to preserve and protect our unity that the Holy Spirit has given us.

IN VERSE 3b, ~ PAUL SHOWS US A WAY TO PRESERVE AND PROTECT THE UNITY the Holy Spirit has given us.

ALL OF VERSE 3 FOR CONTEXT. ~ PAUL SAYS TO BE "EAGER TO MAINTAIN THE UNITY of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

▶▶Here the word "of" means "which is." ~ Paul is saying ~ "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond which is peace."

▶▶The word for "bond" means a "fastener," such as something that holds clothing together, ~ a conjunction that attaches clauses to each other, ~ or a ligament that binds bone to muscle.

▷▷Here Paul is using the imagery of something that fastens things together: ~ peace is the "fastener" that helps preserve and protect the church's unity.

↳↳So, ~ being at peace with one another will help us make it a priority to continually make every effort to preserve and protect the unity we have from the Holy Spirit.

→→And peace must be worked out in practical ways, ~ such as having the attitudes toward one another that we discussed last week.

↳↳I.e., ~ to be humble, ~ self-controlled, ~ slow to become angry, ~ and tolerant in our relationships with our fellow believers.

NOW, ~ HAVING SAID ALL THAT, ~ AT THIS POINT, ~ must sound cautionary note.

IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT FOR US TO UNDERSTAND THAT PAUL IS NOT CALLING us to peace and unity at all costs. 🚫 4/9

▶▶E.g., ~ we are not to sacrifice doctrinal purity and biblical truth in order to preserve and protect unity and to have peace in the church.

▷▷For instance, ~ we are to reject the attitude that says something like, ~ 77

↪↪“We are not interested in doctrines, ~ but in love. ~ Now, let’s forget our doctrines and just love one another.”

→→This attitude must be rejected.

▷▷While not all believers agree on some minor matters of Christian doctrine, ~ they all do agree on the foundational truths of the faith.

↪↪Unity and peace built on anything other than Bible truth is built on a foundation made of sand.

▷▷Paul addressed the issue of doctrinal purity in his instructions to Titus on qualifications for elders.

↪↪In Titus 1:9, ~ he wrote, ~ “He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, ~ so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine ~ and also to rebuke those who contradict it.”

▷▷And in Jude 3, ~ Jude writes, ~ “Beloved, ~ although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, ~ I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.”

↪↪The “faith” here is the body of God’s revealed truth that Scripture contains and the apostles preached.

↪↪Then Jude goes on and explains why he “found it necessary to write appealing to [us] to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

→→He writes in verse 4, ~ “For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation ~ [i.e., ~ the condemnation that he will describe in the subsequent verses], ~

↪↪ungodly people, ~ who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, ~ Jesus Christ.”

↪↪Distorting sound doctrine incurs God’s condemnation. 77 5/9

▶▶Furthermore, ~ we are not to tolerate sin in order to preserve and protect unity and to have peace in the church.

▷▷In [1 Corinthians](#), ~ Paul, ~ who insists that we make it a priority to continually do all we can to preserve and protect our unity through the bond which is peace, ~ ¶¶

↳↳was very harsh with the Corinthian church because they were tolerating sin in their fellowship.

↳↳In [1 Cor. 5:2](#), ~ he tells them, ~ "And you are inflated with pride, ~ and should you not rather have mourned, ~ so that the one who has done this deed would be removed from your midst?" **LEB**

↳↳In [verse 5](#), ~ he says, ~ "I have decided to hand over such a person to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, ~ in order that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord." **LEB**

↳↳And in [vs. 13b](#), ~ Paul says, ~ "Remove the evil person from among yourselves." **LEB**

▶▶It's quite obvious, ~ we are not to sweep sin under the carpet or sacrifice doctrinal purity and biblical truth in order to preserve and protect unity and to have peace in the church.

▷▷Making it a priority ~ to continually make every effort ~ to preserve and protect the unity that the Holy Spirit has given us ~ **does not include tolerating sin or sacrificing doctrinal purity.**

↳↳It **does** include all God-honoring and God-pleasing efforts.

IN VV. 4-6, ~ PAUL STATES WHY WE ARE TO MAKE IT A PRIORITY TO continually make every effort to preserve and protect this unity that God the Holy Spirit has given us.

THIS IS BEYOND THE FACT THAT IT'S SOMETHING THAT SHOULD RESULT FROM what God has done for and given us.

▶▶^{4a}There is one body ~ ^{4b}and one Spirit — ^{4c}just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call — ^{5a}one Lord, ~ ^{5b}one faith, ~ ^{5c}one baptism, ~ ⁶one God and Father of all, ~ who is over all and through all and in all. ~ ~ **With 7 ones, ~ Paul emphasizes our unity.**

IN VERSE 4a, ~ PAUL SAYS "THERE IS ONE BODY." ~ ~ ALREADY TOUCHED ON this earlier.

▶▶Here can just say that the Church, ~ though composed of many individuals, ~ distributed throughout many congregations throughout many ages and places, ~ is a single whole. **¶¶ 6/9**

IN VERSE 4b, ~ HE SAYS THERE IS "ONE SPIRIT."

▶▶ There is one Holy Spirit who links us to Jesus, ~ who dwells within us, ~ and who joins us together as a body.

▷▷ Recall back in [1 Cor. 12:13](#), ~ Paul said one Spirit baptized us into the body of Christ, ~ and we all share that same Holy Spirit.

▶▶ There is no division or confusion in God the Holy Spirit. ~~ And there is to be no division or confusion in the church.

IN VERSE 4c, ~ PAUL SAYS THAT WE "WERE CALLED TO THE ONE HOPE THAT BELONGS TO [OUR] CALL."

▶▶ "hope" here is the totality of what God has promised Christ's followers at the end of this age ~ and in the life to come.

▶▶ Consider the following four examples of what our hope includes.

▷▷ It includes the promise of Jesus' second coming, ~ the promise of our resurrection and glorification, ~ God's promise of our inheritance, ~ and God's promise of a new universe.

▶▶ All of Jesus' disciples share in this "one hope."

▷▷ And because we all share in this "one hope," ~ we are to make it a priority ~ to continually make every effort ~ to preserve and protect the unity that the Holy Spirit has given us.

IN VERSE 5a, ~ HE SAYS THAT THERE IS "ONE LORD."

▶▶ Because he refers to the Holy Spirit in the previous verse ~ and the Father in the next verse, ~ there is no question that Paul is referring here to Jesus.

▶▶ Jesus, ~ and Jesus alone, ~ provided redemption for us, ~ is head over the church, ~ and is Lord of our lives.

▶▶ It is difficult to believe that two believers can claim to obey the same Lord, ~ and yet not be able to walk together in unity.

▷▷ Acknowledging the Lordship of Christ and genuinely putting ourselves under it ~ ¶¶
↳ ↳ is a giant step toward making it a priority ~ to continually make every effort ~ to preserve and protect the unity that the Holy Spirit has given us. ¶¶ 7/9

IN VERSE 5b, ~ PAUL SAYS THAT THERE IS "ONE FAITH."

▶▶ There is one settled body of truth deposited by Christ in His church.

▶▶ As we know from earlier, ~ Jude calls it "the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints."

▷▷ I.e., ~ the body of God's revealed truth that Scripture contains and the apostles preached.

▶▶ As we noted, ~ While not all of Jesus' blood-bought disciples agree on some minor matters of Christian doctrine, ~ they all do agree on the foundational truths of the faith.

▶▶ And to depart from the "the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" is to cause disunity and confusion within the body of Christ.

IN VERSE 5c, ~ HE SAYS THAT THERE IS "ONE BAPTISM."

▶▶ Since Paul is here discussing the one body, ~ the church, ~ this "one baptism" is probably the baptism of the Spirit, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ the act by which God the Holy Spirit places the believing sinner into the body of Christ at conversion, ~ as 1 Cor. 12:13, ~ which we looked at earlier, ~ spells out for us.

▶▶ This "one baptism" unites all believers with Jesus ~ and puts all believers on the same footing.

▶▶ Since all believers experience the same reality of being united with Jesus, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ the logical conclusion is to make it a priority ~ to continually make every effort ~ to preserve and protect this unity that the Holy Spirit has given us.

IN VERSE 6, ~ PAUL SAYS THAT THERE IS "ONE GOD AND FATHER OF ALL, ~ WHO IS OVER ALL AND THROUGH ALL AND IN ALL."

▶▶ Now, ~ it is extremely important at the outset to understand that Paul is not teaching some universal Fatherhood of God or universal indwelling.

▷▷ The context is speaking strictly of believers, ~ those who

↪↪ We could paraphrase verse 6 this way: ~ "There is one God and Father of all believers, ~ who is over all believers ~ and through all believers ~ and in all believers."

▶▶ The phrase "over all" likely refers to the Father ruling over all believers. ~ And the phrase "through all" likely refers to the Father working through all believers.

▷▷ So, ~ to build on [verse 6](#), ~ ¶¶

↪↪ "There is one God and Father of all believers, ~ who rules over all believers ~ and works through all believers ~ and indwells all believers."

▶▶ The unity of believers in God's family is visible here, ~ for the One Father rules over each believer, ~ works through each believer, ~ and indwells each believer.

▷▷ My brothers and sisters in Christ, ~ we are children of the Same Father, ~ we love and serve the Same Father, ~ so it is incumbent upon us, ~ His children, ~ ¶¶

↪↪ to make it a priority ~ to continually make every effort ~ to preserve and protect this unity that the Holy Spirit has given us.

▷▷ Just as in an earthly family, ~ the various members must cooperate to maintain unity in the home, ~ so God's family, ~ His blood-bought church, ~ must do the same.

▷▷ Always remember that, ~ in [Matt. 6:9](#), ~ the Lord's Prayer begins with "Our Father," ~ not "My Father!"

CONCLUSION.

SO, ~ TO PARAPHRASE AND COMBINE 4:1 WITH 4:3, ~ PAUL SAYS TO US, ~ DISCIPLES of Jesus, ~ ¶¶

▶▶ "As a result of all that God has done for and given you, ~ the truth spelled out in the first three chapters of this letter, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ I, ~ a prisoner of the Lord, ~ urge you to make it a priority ~ to continually ~ make every God-honoring and God-pleasing effort to preserve and protect this unity that the Holy Spirit has given us."

LET'S PRAY 9/9