

“One”

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Read Ephesians 4:1-6

Whatever Paul brings to the table in 4:1 and following is a consequence of his previous thought. Paul begins in verse 4:1 by imploring his audience “to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which they have been called.” Somehow we have twisted the thought of walking worthy to mean something that is meritorious and thus resulting in our acceptance before the Father. Yet everything up to this point clearly points out how our acceptance before and access to the Father is firmly rooted in and flowing from our *in Christ* status (1:5; 2:18; 3:12).

“He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will” (Eph. 1:5).

“For through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father” (Eph. 2:18).

“In whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him” (Eph. 3:12).

The thought of *worthy* is something that is *compatible with* or *suitable to*. Paul’s simple thought is that our lives should mimic our spiritual union with Christ. Whatever we are *in Christ* we should be while *in the world*. It is His life flowing *into* us and thus flowing *out of* us. Although it might be anti-climatic, let us not forget that the “us” of Ephesians is the “we” of the church and not the “us” of isolated independent individualism.

Paul’s primary point in the first six verses is for His church to look unified because it is unified (vv. 1-6) and the only way this unity can become tangible is through the design depicted in verses 7-16. His language is intense, “Being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” New Testament commentator Markus Barth seeks to capture the intensity of speech used by the apostle.

“It is hardly possible to render exactly the urgency contained in the underlying Greek verb. Not only haste and passion, but a full effort of the whole man is meant, involving his will, sentiment, reason, physical strength, and total attitude. The imperative mood of the participle found in the Greek text excludes passivity, quietism, a wait-and-see attitude, or a diligence tempered by all deliberate speed. Yours is the initiative! Do it now! Mean it! You are to do it! I mean it! – such are the overtones in verse 3.” (Markus Barth, *The Anchor Bible, Ephesians 4-6*, 428).

The worthy walk does not attain unity or create something that previously did not exist. A walk marked by unity is equal with and suitable to the unity we already have in Christ. The worthy walk is a consequence, not a causation of. But why is the church one? Let us answer this from the response given by Paul in verses 4-6.

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⁴ “There is one body and one Spirit, just 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” (Eph. 4:4-6).

In verses 4 through 6 we have a confession or creed of the early church. The intent is to show the God-ward makeup of the New Testament Church. **There is a singularity and solidarity to the body of Christ that transcends every ethnic, geographic, cultural, gender, or financial identifiers.** In fact, the only thing that identifies the body of Christ is: one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father.

It is interesting to see how the New Testament takes away everything our present age deems necessary and essential. The church of Christ is not marked by its cosmetic covering, but by its essential energy.

Like Joseph’s coat of many colors, the one body of Christ is made up of unlimited colors and threads, but the coat itself is still singular. There is only one Holy Spirit. There is only one destiny to which all of His people long for and hope in. There is only one King to whom His church bows. There is only one object believed in that makes faith salvific. There is only one baptism that places the believing into the body and thus comprising the one body. There is only one God and Father of all who is ruling all and controlling all. Regardless as to what flag each of the individual parts flies under and stands by it bears the standard of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

In the early centuries of the Christian church they were without a finalized New Testament canon. There were copies of Paul’s letters in circulation and the truths of Jesus Christ were communicated orally, but there was still a dynamic and fluid existence that is somewhat incapable of being experienced by the Western 21st century church. In the midst of this dynamic, the church penned creeds and confessions so that what was known was clearly defined and those who would gather in the name of Jesus would rally around a common thought. The Apostles Creed was one such rallying cry. Read carefully the words penned below and seek to understand them in the context of the early first century church. May His people continue to rally around the great truths of the Christian faith.

THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God the Father Almighty; Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven; and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy Christian Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

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