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Introduction

1. This study is in the practical section of the epistle. Doctrine is given first (chaps.1-3); now expression of the beliefs (chaps. 4-6).

2. The chapter begins with an appeal (v. 1). It relates to a believer's walk and calling. Details of the appeal include lowliness, meekness, long suffering, forbearance, and unity (vv. 2, 3).

3. The mention of unity alerts Paul to consider seven unities which constitute the foundation on which the Holy Spirit effects true oneness among the saints.

1. The unity of the ONE BODY v. 4.

This is obviously a reference to the church which is Christ's body (Eph. 1:22, 23). Contextually, the idea is that there is unity between Jews and Gentiles (2:11-3:12). This is the one organism, and one only, consisting of the grace age regenerated under the one Head, Christ. Though many, the body is one (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 10:17; 12:27).

2. The unity of the ONE SPIRIT v. 4.

There is no exhortation to unanimity of feeling or a declaration that such unanimity exists. It is a statement of fact. "Spirit" obviously means the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit indwells all believers (Rom. 8:9, 11; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19). His presence is the ultimate ground of our unity as the body of Christ. He is our common principle of life. All sins against unity are, therefore, sins against the Holy Spirit. This demands that we love the brethren and live at peace with them (cf. v. 3).

3. The unity of the ONE HOPE v. 4.

Believers all have the same hope of sharing ultimately in the glory of God (Rom. 5:2; 1 John 3:2). This hope flows from the vocation (calling, v. 1). Paul elsewhere uses the eternal future as an argument for believers to have love

one for another (Col. 1:4). Singleness of hope is unity.

4. The unity of the ONE LORD v. 5.

Only the Spirit of God can make one call Christ Lord (1 Cor. 12:3). All believers see Him as Lord (Rom. 10:9). Early Christians were zealous and jealous for this prerogative of the Saviour. Some died for it. As Lord, He is both Sovereign and Owner in the most absolute sense. Such sovereignty and loyalty binds believers together. None is allowed to siphon any of His glory.

5. The unity of the ONE FAITH v. 5.

Faith is often used of objective truth (Acts 6:7; Gal. 1:23). Admittedly, there is no creed objectively given with which all would find agreement. It is best, therefore, to understand "faith" as subjective. It is the single item which gives us identical peace and favor (Acts 4:12). No other arrangement for eternal salvation will do.

6. The unity of the ONE BAPTISM v. 5.

In an epistle which concerns the body of Christ, the most eminent idea conveyed by "baptism" is that of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). This is what binds true believers together in the body. Yet, one must not minimize the importance of ritual baptism for believers. It affirms the reality of the real baptism (Spirit) in one's life (Matt. 28:19; 1 Pet. 3:21).

7. The unity of the ONE GOD v. 6.

The Father is the ultimate source of spiritual unity. He is Father of all creation, but here the idea is limited to those who are born of God's Spirit. Three thoughts are revealed here: a. His sovereignty. He is utterly paramount and superior to all. b. His immanence. This speaks of His diffusion in that He pervades and controls all. He does not exist in remote indifference. c. His indwelling. This expresses personal and intimate relationships. The church is indeed a habitation of God through the Spirit (2:22).

Conclusion The trinity is involved here in unity. Really, it is this doctrine which binds us forever together. True Christianity accepts the oneness of the children of God.