

# One

Ephesians 4:1-6

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Alexis de Tocqueville was a French political writer who visited the United States in the 1800's, and studied our country intently. He came to the conclusion that there was an inherent struggle in our country between two opposing impulses: the spirit of rugged individualism versus the conflicting spirit of community and belonging. That's very true and we're always wrestling with it in the church. And based on Paul's letter, we always have been. He wants us to get one word this morning: One! How to stay as one, though many.

Notice how carefully he establishes this truth about One. "I therefore," (v. 1). As a wise preacher once said, whenever you see a "therefore," you should look to see what the therefore is there for! He has finished three chapters about the great work God is doing in Christ, now chapters 4-6, so what? "As a prisoner in the Lord..." Not a prisoner OF the Lord, but IN the Lord. If we're going to stay united as one, we have to be paying more attention to what is happening in us and above us than what is happening around us!

A Lord's Supper Sunday is always a great time to remind us what Christ is doing in us. And because Jesus is carrying out his great resurrection life inside us, he expects a response. Verse 3 says we are to do so in the bond of peace. That word "bond" was used in carpentry to describe a chain or cable, or wooden beams, anything that connects. It was used in anatomy to describe ligaments. It was used in grammar to describe conjunctions. The word bond meant "the middle thing." Jesus is "the middle thing," the one who joins us together.

I was preaching once in south Florida on this topic of Christian fellowship and unity. A Presbyterian pastor who was present told about picking up a Laotian family at the airport. They didn't know one another. They didn't speak the same language. So what did he do? He started singing hymns...and they joined in, in their own language! Jesus was the bond! Nothing else! When I was in Ukraine in 2013, during a seminary class, we were asked to look up a particular verse, one which has meant a great deal to me. Olag was sitting beside me. I'd never met him. We didn't speak the same language. But I noticed we both had the verse underlined! Jesus is the bond!

If you don't believe that the word ONE was important to The Apostle Paul, answer this: How many times did he use the word? See vv. 4-6. One body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father. And by the way, in the Greek, there is no verb in v. 4, just these words: One body and one Spirit...one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God...As if he is reciting a song or poem or a creed. It's an exclamation. One. Our unity is not in our enthusiasm for the faith, in whether or not we like each other all the time or whether we agree on all Bible doctrines. Our oneness is in the one indivisible God of the Cosmos!

As I said earlier, I attended the international congress of the Baptist World Alliance last week in South Africa. Look at one of logos of the BWA: One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism. Sound familiar?

One brother at the BWA last week gave a beautiful testimony. He is an American and he had visited a refugee camp where most of the people had lost limbs due to land mines. But, he said, you should have heard them worship and praise God! Why? Because they were prisoners IN Christ, not OF Christ. Because they knew Jesus as the bond of peace, the middle thing which holds us all together. They knew the meaning of the word ONE. And us? We want to argue about worship style, or fuss about political differences or divide up over petty grievances. While these double amputees lift loud praise to God.

No wonder the Apostle Paul could shout: that our Lord is God and Father of all, above all, through all and in all.