

This morning we're continuing with our series *One* talking about the unity of the church. In Ephesians chapter four, in verse four through six, Paul gives us seven reasons why the church should make every effort to keep the bonds of unity. He tells us that "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

When we started this series a few weeks ago, we talked about how the same Spirit of God has filled each and every Christian since Pentecost. We talked about how the same Spirit of Christ is teaching all of us and guiding all of us into all truth. Sometimes he uses you to teach me something and other times he uses me to teach you something. Either way, it's still the same Spirit in all of us.

Then, two weeks ago we talk how there is one body of Christ. We talked about how all of us are members of this one body and that each of us has gifts, abilities, talents and experience that we bring to the body. We talked about how the body needs each member in order to fully function and the dangers of elevating the importance of one part of the body over the others.

This week we turn our attention to that final phrase of verse four where Paul says, "Just as you have been called to one hope when you were called." All Christians have been called the one hope, but what is that hope? What does that look like? What does that mean for our everyday lives? Before we jump in, let's pray and ask God to help us this morning.

Just as you were called to one hope when you were called. All Christians have the same hope. It's a hope that we were called to. And we weren't just called to it, we were called to hope when we were called. It's an odd way to phrase this. It's a little redundant. Kind of like if you worked at the Department of Redundancy Department. But it's actually the second time in this opening section of Ephesians 4 that Paul does this. He said it before in verse one when he says, "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received." A better or a more accurate translation would be "a calling with which you have been called."

So first Paul tells us to live a life worthy of the calling with which we have been called and then a few short verses later tells us that we have been called to one hope when we were called. It's like the Department of Redundancy Department... of Redundancy Department. It's like Paul really doesn't want the Ephesians to miss that they have a particular call on their lives. And this call has something to do with hope which when understood should help them be united. Now first, I want to talk about this idea of unity. Then, we're going to talk about hope. And finally calling. Let's talk about unity.

If you go back to the beginning of the book of Ephesians, Paul says in verses 9 & 10, "He made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ." So Paul is saying that it has been God's will and it gives him good pleasure to unite everything, both in heaven and on earth, under Christ Jesus.

This is God's great, big cosmic plan; his ultimate goal for the world is to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under the reign and rule of Jesus. This is something that the New Testament authors talk about again and again and again.

In Colossians 1:19-20, Paul says it this way, “For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on a cross.”

Or in 2 Corinthians 5, when Paul says, “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them.”

The word “world” in this passage is the Greek word *kosmos*, it literally means the universe or the cosmos. It’s where our word cosmic comes from.

According to Paul, it’s God’s will that Jesus unites and reconciles everything in the entire universe.

Or as Peter says in Acts 3, “Heaven must receive him [Jesus] until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through the holy prophets.”

Or as Jesus himself says in Matthew 19, “Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne...”

According to Paul, Jesus is uniting all things and reconciling all things. Peter says that God is restoring all things. And Jesus says that there will be a renewal of all things.

Now the Greek word that the New Testament uses for “all things” is the word *pas* and it means all things. Not some things. Not a few things. Not just Christian things. All things. Everything, everywhere, both in heaven and on earth. Everything in the entire cosmos, in the universe, is going to be united, reconciled, restored, renewed.

Which should help clarify why Paul thinks unity is so important in chapter 4. He says in verse 3, “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bonds of peace.” Why? Not just because unity would be a good thought or because unity might help us tell the world about Jesus, but because unity is the entire point. Unity is God’s ultimate will for the world. And so when we working against unity or when we make it a secondary consideration, we’re working against God’s plan for the world.

Now, a common misconception among some Christians is that Jesus is going to achieve this unity by burning everything up, destroying everything and starting over from scratch. But that’s not how restoration works.

I have a friend AJ who recently has found a hobby in restoring old tools. He goes around to garage sales and second-hand stores and he finds tools that are dirty and old and rusted and he takes them home. A few weeks ago he bought an old hammer and he took it all apart. He sanded down the old wooden handle and he oiled it and he soaked the metal in something that would remove the grease and rust. Then he put the thing back together.

Here we have a before and after picture of the hammer.

It's still the same hammer, but it's been restored. It's renewed. It's back to what it looked like originally. Now, imagine if AJ had purchased that hammer and he said, "I'm going to restore this hammer." But then he proceeded to throw out the hammer and buy a brand new one that looked virtually identical. What would you say if AJ then came up to you and said, "Check it out, I restored this hammer!"?

You'd probably say something along the lines of, "No you didn't, you just got rid of the old one and bought a new one." Restoration requires that you keep the old thing but that you remove the dirt, you clean it up and you fix it and you bring it back to its original purpose.

And so Paul says, "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bonds of peace" because this unity, this restoration, this reconciliation is the entire point of everything Jesus is up to.

That was unity. Now, hope.

In our *These Three Remain* series, we talked about faith, hope and love. And in that series, we talked about how hope is not wishful thinking. A lot of times we use the term hope to mean we wish something might happen. I hope I get that promotion. I hope I have enough money to retire. I hope the Calgary Flames win the Stanley Cup this year. But in Scripture, the word hope isn't about wishful thinking, it's about expectation. We know something is going to happen, we expect something to happen, and we look forward to it with longing. In that series, we talked about hope in a generic sense. That our expectation is that no matter how much we have messed up our story, that God is always able to use it, work with it, and tell a better story.

But there's more to hope than simply expecting God to tell a better story with your life. Back in Ephesians chapter 1, Paul says, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you." He's saying, my prayer is that God would help you understand what to expect from your calling. So what is it exactly that we can expect? What is it that we're hoping for?

In 1 Thessalonians 5:8, Paul says, "But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet." The hope of salvation. Our hope, our expectation, is that Jesus will save us or rescue us. But what exactly is Jesus rescuing us from?

Paul addresses this in Romans 7 when he says, "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me."

He continues in verse 21, "So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging a war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me."

How many of us have experienced this? You know the good you should be doing. You know the right thing to do. There's even a part of you that really wants to do it. You want to be the kind of person who is more generous and more forgiving and more loving.

You want to be less angry or less bitter or less critical. You have that thing inside of you. And you can relate to Paul here. "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do." But he finishes in verse 24, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

When Paul talks about the hope of salvation, this is what he's talking about. He's not talking about rescuing us from the fires of hell. He's talking about Jesus rescuing us from ourselves. He's talking about the God who will save us from our own destructive behaviour.

Furthermore, in Galatians chapter 5 Paul says, "For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope." Not only do we have the hope or the expectation of salvation and rescue from ourselves, but we also have the hope of righteousness.

Now righteousness is not simply about right standing. It's not just a legal term where God looks at us and pretends that we're okay even though we're not.

In Ezekiel 36 God says, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws."

It's not just that God will look at us and pretend that we are okay. When we choose to follow him, when we choose to let him, God will actually work in our hearts. He will give us his Spirit and change our stone hearts into hearts of flesh. He will move us to follow his decrees.

Our hope, our expectation, is not simply that Jesus will one day take us to heaven. Our hope is that Jesus will save us from these bodies that are subject to death. Our hope is that he will work in us to renew us and restore us. That he will put his Spirit in us and empower us to live the way he calls us.

Now, let's talk about that word *call*.

Paul was a Jewish man writing to the church in Ephesus that was made up of both Jews and Gentiles, which means they all would have been very familiar with the story of the Jewish people. And what Paul loves to do in his writings is that he loves to use loaded terms. He will use a particular word or a phrase as a way to reference something from the Hebrew Scriptures.

So when he says in Ephesians 1:18, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which you were called." Or again in Ephesians 4, he says, "Live a life worthy of the call with which you have been called" and "you were called to one hope when you were called."

Then the question we should ask ourselves is, does this idea of calling come up anywhere else in Scripture?

The story of the Jewish people starts with one man named Abram who God later renamed Abraham.

And the story of Abraham starts out this way, “The Lord has said to Abram, ‘Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.’”

Central to the theology and identity of Israel is the fact that they have been called by God. They have been invited or summoned by God to be his special possession starting all the way back with Abraham. But notice what that originally calling from God says.

“I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.”

“All peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

Abraham and the tribe that he started were called out by God. But the purpose of that calling wasn’t so they could get together and talk about how much more God loved them than the rest of the world. Rather, God invited Abraham to be part of his plan to bless the world. The reason he was called was so that he could go out and be a blessing to others. When God calls us, it’s not for our own benefit, but for the benefit of others.

So when Paul says, “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you.” What he’s saying is, “I want you to understand why; I want you to understand the reason God has called you.” The mystery of the universe has been revealed to us. God’s will is that all things would be united, renewed, restored, reconciled through Christ. And our expectation is that he is in the process of saving us and making us righteous. And our calling, our summons, our invitation is to partner with God. To be a blessing to the rest of the world by sharing that good news.

Which should lead us to ask ourselves a couple questions. How do we understand the good news about Jesus? How do we understand the gospel? Is the gospel simply that God is angry, but if you jump through the right hoop, if you say the right thing, if you “pray the prayer”, that you can somehow satiate that anger? Or is the gospel that Jesus is already in the process of uniting all things, reconciling all things, restoring all things and renewing all things?

Furthermore, what is our role as a church? The word church in Greek is the word *ekklesia* and it comes from *klesis* the word Paul uses for calling. The church is the called out ones, those invited and summoned by God. What are we invited to? Are we simply called to be the in-group, waiting around for Jesus to finally take us somewhere else? Or are we called and invited to go out and proclaim the good news to a lost and hurting world that God is in the process of uniting and restoring everything?

As Christians, as followers of Jesus, we have all been called to one hope when we were called. We have been invited to work with Jesus in restoring and uniting all things.

And my prayer for us this morning is the eyes of our hearts may be enlightened in order that we may know the hope to which he has called us.

Let's pray.