

Theme: The Church is given a unity that flows from the life of the Trinity, but we must work to maintain this unity in practice.

## I. Intro - Walls Tumbling Down!

- A. Reagan's call - tear down this wall!! And it came down!
- B. Suddenly Germany could reunite
- C. But reunification did not come easily
- D. They were now united as one nation, but working that out in practice took years
- E. Christ has broken down the walls, but building a beautiful community of unity will require hard work!

## II. The Source & Example of Unity - The Trinity

- A. The theme of unity is central in this passage  
There is **one** body and **one** Spirit — just as you were called to **one** hope when you were called — <sup>5</sup> **one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism; <sup>6</sup> **one** God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. Ephes 4:4–6
  - 1. The word 'one' occurs 7x - full, perfect unity!
  - 2. We must understand the essential unity of the faith
    - a. We are one body (church), with one hope, one faith
    - b. We all share in one baptism into Christ
    - c. We all worship the One True God
  - 3. We must understand the underlying unity of all Christians. We are one Church because what unites us is far greater than anything that could divide us.

- B. The source and example of unity is the Trinity  
There is one body and **one Spirit** — just as you were called to one hope when you were called — <sup>5</sup> **one Lord**, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup> **one God and Father** of all, who is over all and through all and in all. Ephes 4:4–6
  - 1. One Spirit, One Lord (Jesus), One God and Father
  - 2. Trinitarian theology underlies this call for unity
  - 3. This is critical because it is a call for unity, not uniformity - The Trinity is unity and diversity, not absolute uniformity
  - 4. This point is reinforced by the fact that the church is comprised of people from many “tribes”  
There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:28
    - a. We are not one in Christ because we are all the same; we are one in Christ even though we are all very different from one another!
    - b. Whatever our background or differences, they must never eclipse our unity in Christ.
  - 5. This Trinitarian unity rather than uniformity is reinforced by the different gifts we are all given to serve and build the body.  
But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it... <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. Ephesians 4:7, 16
    - a. Each one is given distinct 'grace' - gifts
    - b. The body grows and becomes strong not because we all have the same gift but because we have different gifts and functions, each of which is necessary to strengthen the church & help it grow.

c. We will speak more about this next week.

C. Because the Trinity is the source and example of unity for the Church, we are called to a beautiful unity comprised of diverse people and gifts, all united in the one true faith, serving one another, and building the church.

### III. The Call To Walk In Unity

A. We are given unity in the Spirit

Make every effort to **keep the unity of the Spirit** through the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:3

1. We do not create unity; we are called to keep or maintain the unity we have been given in the Spirit
2. The unity of Christians is the gift of God not the accomplishment of humans.
3. Unity is the default position of all believers, and disunity is always a result of sin, especially desiring or prioritizing other loyalties or beliefs over the Gospel and the unity of the Spirit.

B. We must work hard to keep the unity of the Spirit

**Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit** through the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:3

1. The unity we have with other believers is a gift, but we must work hard to maintain it.
2. Sin will always be working to undermine the unity we have been given and to bring disunity and alienation into our relationships within the local church and between churches.
3. To maintain the unity of the Spirit will always require hard work and sacrifice. There is no such thing as easy or inexpensive unity.

C. The character requirements for unity

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. <sup>2</sup> Be completely **humble** and **gentle**; be **patient, bearing with one another in love**. <sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through **the bond of peace**.  
Ephesians 4:1–3

1. Humble, gentle, patient, bearing with one another, love are all terms that describe the character traits that are required to keep the unity of the Spirit.
2. The 'bond of peace' is a picture of being restrained for the sake of peace.
3. All of the traits indicate a willingness to restrain my preferences, desires, and natural inclinations for the good of others and for the sake of keeping unity.
4. Together these traits describe a person who is willing to go the extra mile to not offend, to understand the beliefs and experiences of the other person, and to be willing to sacrifice personal rights for the good of the other and maintain the unity of the Spirit.
5. This does not mean that we are not people of the truth, or that we compromise God's Word in the name of unity.
6. But it does mean we are very careful to determine if something is truly essential, core Christian beliefs and practices or secondary matters or merely personal preference.
7. Much disunity, division, and strife is claimed to be standing for the truth when in reality it is merely pride and preferring my way over what will keep the unity of the Spirit.

8. We will be looking at some of these traits in future weeks in the series.

#### IV. Applying the Word

##### A. Unity in 2020

1. This year presents major challenges to unity - coronavirus, how to address racial injustice
2. You may have strong feelings about these topics and think others must have ulterior motives if they disagree
3. But think of the level of disagreement between Jews and Gentiles in the early church - circumcision, what foods they could eat, meat sacrificed to idols, cultural practices. These seemed insurmountable as people on each side felt strongly.
4. But God asserted none of them were as important as the unity of the Spirit. If they were willing to work through these issues we can work through ours!
5. You may disagree with elders' decisions on how to walk through issues related to COVID19 - we don't always agree either! But we walk in unity!
6. Hopefully, we all agree that racial injustice is wicked - but we may think differently about how to address it in our time and place.
7. Please be aware that social media is pooled ignorance and almost entirely blatant distortions or lies. **FOR THE SAKE OF CHRIST, DO NOT ADD TO IT AND THEREBY ALIENATE YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS!!**
8. These are huge challenges - but the call to unity must override all of them!

9. We have been given the precious gift of unity in the Spirit - let's not throw it away!

##### B. Am I working hard to maintain the unity of the Spirit?

1. Paul tells us this will always be hard work!
2. I think it is even harder in American culture
3. We have made an idol of individual rights
4. But Scripture has a **STRONG** emphasis on community and the need to give up my rights for the good of others and the sake of unity
5. Americans also often just separated and moved to a new area rather than work out conflicts
6. But Scripture calls us to the **HARD WORK** of staying and learning to work through our difficulties
7. These things have affected the American evangelical church massively. We cater to individualism and separate easily to go to another church down the road.
8. Am I willing to do the hard work necessary to maintain the unity of the Spirit at BRCC?
9. Am I growing in the character necessary to maintain the unity of the Spirit - humility, gentleness, bearing with others in love? (We ALL need to grow in this!)
10. Do I value my 'rights' more than I value the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace? Am I willing to give up my 'rights' for the good of others and for unity?

##### C. A prayer for unity

## The Beautiful Community - Unity

Ephesians 4:1-6

June 28, 2020

Prayer

Romans 15:5-6

Teaching keywords: Church; Trinity; unity; character

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 15:5–6

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. <sup>2</sup> Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. <sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit — just as you were called to one hope when you were called — <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. Ephesians 4:1–6