

All in the name of Christ Jesus

We are doing a study on the essential attitude for preserving the unity of the body of Christ as we operate in our spiritual gifts. It is the attitude of humility. NOT I.

/There are three “NOT I”s for our spiritual life. They are NOT I BUT SIN, NOT I BUT CHRIST, and NOT I BUT OTHERS.\

Last Sunday, we learned about the method that God uses to bring us into the NOT I BUT CHRIST life. Here’s the recap:

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1. Hear (or read) the facts.
2. Believe the facts.
3. Think new thoughts based on those facts.
4. Live according to your new thinking.\

The method God uses to teach us starts with facts He has revealed in His word. God leads us step by step into a whole new life based on these facts.

/Not I but Christ. It starts with facts about Christ and about us. It moves to thinking a new way. It leads to living a new life.\

2 Cor 5:14-15

14 For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; 15 and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.

/The NOT I BUT CHRIST attitude bears fruit when we live lives that are no longer about ourselves but instead are about Christ. \

Let's see now how the facts lead to the NOT I BUT CHRIST life.

/You died. Your old man was crucified with Christ.\

/You have been raised up with Christ. You are a new creation.\

What are the features of this life that we live for the Lord?

/It's a life where we have put aside the old man and are putting him away.\

Eph 4:20-23

But you did not learn Christ in this way, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, 22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old man, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind,...

/It's a life where we are being renewed in our spiritual mind.\

That new man is being renewed to a true knowledge.

24 and put on the new man, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

/It's a life where we are putting on the new man. \

NOT I BUT CHRIST.

Romans 13:14 Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

/And always keep this in mind : The life rests on the facts.\

But for these facts, we could not live the NOT I BUT CHRIST life. If you ignore the facts, you can't live the life.

/The life of putting away the old man rests on the fact that our old man was crucified with Christ.\

If you move away from that fact, you'll struggle in your attempts to put away the old man. You'll be frustrated. You'll be defeated.

/The life of putting on the new man rests on the facts that we have been raised up with Christ, and Christ is in us, and our life is hidden with Christ in God.\

Don't think, OK I can do this myself. You'll never be able to do it by yourself. Christ is our life, and we can only live this life as one who has been raised with Him.

OK so now let's see what this new life looks like, this life of putting away the old man and putting on the new man.

/First: What does it mean to put away the old man? What does that life look like?\

Col 3:8-9

8 But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old man with its evil practices,

and have put on the new man who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the One who created him.

/Second: What does the life of putting on the new man look like?\

Col 3:12-17

12 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. 15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.

16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

/The NOT I BUT CHRIST life leads us onto the NOT I BUT OTHERS life.\

Paul makes this practical in Ephesians 4:25-29

Eph 4:25-29

25 Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE of you WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another. 26 BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and do not give the devil an opportunity. 28 He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need. 29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

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I need to give you three other fundamental aspects of this life.

/They are (1) the destination of the journey, (2) the gift we receive along the way, and (3) the surpassing power that propels us forward. \

The Bible calls this life a walk. A walk has a starting point and a destination. The starting point of our new life is Christ: his death and resurrection.

What is the destination – the goal?

Rom 8:28-29

*28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to **become conformed to the image of His Son**, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;*

It should come as no surprise that the goal of this NOT I BUT CHRIST life is..Christ!!

/The goal, the destination is conformity to the image and likeness of Christ.\

God has given us a gracious gift to enable us to attain the goal. You might not think of it as a gift. God does however. And He's for us. All of His gifts are good.

Phil 1:29-30

29 For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, 30 experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

/The NOT I BUT CHRIST life includes the gift of suffering for His sake.\

Let's continue in Philippians: chapter 3.

Phil 3:7-11

7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, 9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Paul suffered the loss of all things in order to gain Christ, to come to know Him.

He came to see that coming to know Christ includes participating in the sufferings of Christ. This is a life of sharing in the sufferings of Christ.

This is a profound demonstration of the attitude of not I but Christ. We never get beyond the death and resurrection of Christ.

And not only that: he came to realize that the power he needed to live this life did not come from him. It came from Christ. It is the power of Christ's resurrection.

/The power to live this NOT I BUT CHRIST life does not come from us. It comes from the resurrection of Christ. \

2 Cor 12:9-10

9 And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

We may start off thinking that we possess the power to live this life. But by hard experience we learn that it does not.

/Our suffering will reveal this: the power can only be of God and not of ourselves.\

2 Cor 1:8-9

8 For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; 9 indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead;

When affliction comes into our life, at some point we find that the burden is beyond our own strength. That's not good, but it leads to something fantastic.

We learn the lesson that we should not trust ourselves. We need to trust in God who raises the dead.

Living for Christ leads to living for others. Our afflictions become channels of comfort for others. Death works in us so life can work in others.

NOT I BUT OTHERS is the third essential attitude. We begin that next Sunday.

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Our goal is to become mature in our thinking. The thinking that Jim Elliot shared with the apostle Paul in Php 1:

Phil 1:18-22

18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice.

Yes, and I will rejoice, 19 for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 20 according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

To live is Christ.

/Christ is our life. FACT. \

/For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. Mature thinking.\

/And the road to maturity passes through suffering. \

Phil 3:7-8

7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,

/This is a profound expression of the attitude of NOT I BUT CHRIST.\

Php 3: 9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,

/NOT I BUT CHRIST. Paul learned to think this way about righteousness. \

At one time, he thought he could have a righteousness of his own by keeping the Law, one that he earned, that belonged to him, one that he could boast in.

Paul came to understand that /there was nothing he could ever do to merit righteousness. It was freely given through faith in what Christ did on his behalf.\

Not I but Christ.

Php 3:10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

/This life we live by faith, is a life of coming to know Him better and better.\

It's a life of living in the power of His resurrection.

/ It is also a life of sharing in His sufferings. \

Phil 1:29-30

29 For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, 30 experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

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The road to mature thinking passes through suffering.

/We become partners with Christ. We suffer for His sake.\

And that is a great, great privilege.

NOT I BUT CHRIST.

Next week we will continue along this line of study to learn more about the NOT I BUT CHRIST life.

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Rom 3:19-24

19 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; 20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

NOT I BUT CHRIST.

/Thought leads to action.\

And remember the order that was laid out for us in Romans 6:

/First we know a fact.

Then we believe that fact, and believe it's true for us.

Then we choose to live accordingly.\

Fact: I have died, and my life is hidden with Christ in God.

John 15:4-5

4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

Act:

Phil 4:13

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

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/The NOT I BUT CHRIST attitude bears fruit when we live lives that are no longer about ourselves but instead are about Christ. \

2 Cor 5:14-15

For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; 15 and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.

/It's no accident that Peter, Paul, Timothy, James, and Jude called themselves bond-servants of Christ.\

Phil 1:1

Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus,

James 1:1

James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,

/I used to be a slave to sin. But now I am a slave of Christ. \

Rom 12:1

1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

*/Not I but Christ. I put myself at His disposal. *

John 12:1-8

Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. 2 So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him. 3 Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. 4 But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, 5 "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?" 6 Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it. 7 Therefore Jesus said, "Let her alone, so

that she may keep it for the day of My burial. 8 "For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me."

Not I but Christ.

Next time, we will continue with the third "NOT I"

/NOT I BUT OTHERS\

Story about Gale Sayers and Brian Piccolo

"I AM THIRD" [Christ is first, others are second, I am third]

Rom 15:1-7

15 Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves. 2 Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. 3 For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED YOU FELL ON ME." 4 For whatever was

written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. 5 Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, 6 so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7 Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.
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And He says to us, as I have done this for you, you lay down your life for the brethren.

1 John 3:16

16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

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We are all members of one another.

/Each of us gets a gift that everyone else needs. I need yours, and you need mine.\

All for one, and one for all.

The human body works the same way. Each member has something vital to contribute to the overall health of the body. At the same time, each member of the human body depends on other members of the body to function properly.

1 Peter 4:10-11

10 As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

We are to be good stewards of the many-faceted grace of God.

/Grace is unmerited blessing from God.\

Grace is God acting freely, according to His own nature as Love; with no promises or obligations to fulfill, and acting of course righteously, in view of the cross.

Grace is uncaused in the recipient; its cause lies wholly in the giver, who is God.

It can, and often does, bestow the highest favors on those most undeserving of them!

Grace is free, limitless, unmerited blessing to helpless, undeserving people from the loving God who is completely satisfied by the Person and Work of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

When Paul wrote “there are varieties of gifts”, he used the Greek word *charisma*. It stems from the root word *charis*, which means “grace”.

/charisma means “the result of grace”. A gracious gift.\

Our spiritual gift is just that - a gift. Spiritual gifts come from the Holy Spirit.

/ It’s a miraculous endowment. Its power and operation come from God alone.\

1 Peter 4:11

11 Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

The ultimate purpose of spiritual gifts is that God may be glorified through the Lord Jesus Christ.

/So here are nine facts about spiritual gifts:

1. All three members of Trinity are involved.
2. They are marked by great variety.
3. Their source is the Holy Spirit.
4. They are a gift of God's grace.
5. They are given for the purpose of providing service to the church.
6. They are energized by God for action in the believer's life. They run on divine power.
7. Each believer gets one.

8. They are designed to build bonds of unity and love in the church, especially the local congregation. [immediate purpose]
9. God gets the glory through our Lord Jesus Christ. [Ultimate purpose]\

And as we shall see, most if not all of the spiritual gifts in effect now are heightened abilities for actions that all Christians are called to perform.

For example, all Christians are called to give financially, but some have the spiritual gift of giving, which is an unusual capacity for that work.

We are all called to give reasons for the hope that is within us, and we are all called to teach and admonish one another (Colossians 3:16), but some receive the gift of teaching and others have been given to the church as pastor-teachers.

/Paul talks about the unity of the body of Christ in Romans 12, in 1 Corinthians 12, and in Ephesians 4. In each place, he also teaches about the spiritual gifts.\

This is no accident.

Jesus prayed to His Father that believers may be perfected in unity.

God answered His son's prayer from John 17:23 in a remarkable, supernatural way.

He gave each member of the body of Christ an extraordinary spiritual gift.

The Lord provides spiritual gifts in order to preserve the unity of the body.

/We preserve our unity when we operate in our particular gifts; when we use it, put it into service, for the benefit of other believers.\

Rom 12:4-8

4 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. 6 Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; 7 if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching;

8 or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

/The gifts are only supernatural when they are put into action:
Serving, teaching, exhorting, giving, leading, showing mercy.\

The Lord gave you a spiritual gift to serve the common good.

/He wants you to use that gift to meet the needs of the saints in the congregation.\
We have received a special gift – a manifestation of the Spirit in fact - for one purpose - to serve one another.

/Jesus prayed to His Father that we may be perfected in unity. When we use our gifts to serve one another, we contribute to this work.\

1 Peter 4:10-11

As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Whoever speaks. Whoever serves.

/So whatever gift you have, it's either a speaking gift or a serving gift.\
And we need them all to be functioning.

Let's next head to the book of Romans chapter 12 verses 4-8,

Rom 12:4-8

4 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. 6 Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace

given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; 7 if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; 8 or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

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OK so there you have it. Paul lists seven gifts here. /Three are speaking gifts:

Prophecy (Preaching). Teaching. Exhortation.\

/Four are serving gifts: Service. Giving, Leadership. Showing mercy .\

Many gifts – one body. Many gifts, one purpose.

And that purpose, recall? For the common good. To meet the needs of the saints. To serve one another.

From time to time we need to give ourselves a reality check.

I'll leave you with one challenge today. It's in the area of service.

/Service. This is taking the initiative and responsibility to meet a need in the congregation on an ongoing basis.\

Here's a test: we all see things that we wish were handled better or handled at all!
But we need people who rather than judge instead say, I'll take care of that!

Perhaps next time that person will be you.

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You know the 80/20 rule? 80% of the work is done by 20% of the people.

News flash – That's NOT God's design for the congregation! It's more like 400/100.

BTW How did I get the 400? If 80% of the work is getting done with 20% of the members, then if all 100% did the work we could get 5 times as much done!

OK I think that's enough of a grilling for one session!

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Paul started with the unity of the body.

Next, he'll describe its diversity. We'll see this next Sunday starting in verse 14.

Let's pick things up now in verse 14.

1 Cor 12:14-26

For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?

The body has many members. And they display remarkable variety.

At first glance, a thumb appears to have nothing in common with an eye. One is at the end of an arm. The other is in the center of the head.

One has a mechanical function. It has two joints. It works together with the other fingers.

The other gives sight to the body. It is intricate yet delicate.

Paul does something very interesting here. He personifies the body parts. He lets them speak.

This tells us that he is not simply talking about body parts after all. He's talking about people! Later on, in verses 25 and 26, he will say that the members have the same care for one another, and that they rejoice.

Here he has woven together the human body and the body of Christ. We are to understand what he says about the human body also applies to the body of Christ

Next week we will learn more about the body of Christ, starting in verse 18.

18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. 19 If they were all one member, where would the body be? 20 But now there are many members, but one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be

weaker are necessary; 23 and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, 24 whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, 25 so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

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/Out of the many, one.\

E pluribus unum. (Marcus Tullius Cicero, 44 BC. “When each person loves the other as much as himself, it makes one out of many”)

And He places us in the body just as He wills.

With that, let’s now head to Ephesians 4.

That's impossible:

Only the Lord has the blueprint! Our unity is supernatural!

When we examine the epistles, here's what we find:

/We are not called to create the unity of the Body of Christ, the church. But we ARE called to PRESERVE the unity of the body.\

Here is where our decisions and actions matter.

We are called to take actions to nurture the unity, guard the unity.

We are also warned not to do anything that could disrupt or undermine that unity.

/This morning, we are going to examine what the epistles have to say about what the Lord has done to establish our unity.\

Later on, we will learn how to preserve that unity. The epistles address both the positive and the negative commands that the Lord has given the church.

So we pick things up today in the book of Ephesians, chapter 4, verse 1.

Eph 4:1-3

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Notice in verse 3 that we are instructed to be diligent to preserve the unity. You can only preserve something that has already been created and established.

/Who established it? Verse 3 tells us: the Spirit. It's His unity.\

Let's take a look at the nature of this unity that God the Holy Spirit created for us.

/In verses 4-6, Paul identifies the seven essential elements of this unity. \

Eph 4:4 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.

Paul's description highlights the supernatural character of our unity.

A brief scan of these seven elements reveals that this unity is supernatural in character.

/In fact, three of the seven elements are the three persons of the Godhead!!\

Read verses 4-6 again. One Spirit. One Lord. One Father.

/Then there are two elements that are linked with the Spirit. They are the one body, and the one hope of our calling.\

/Finally, two elements are linked with the Lord Jesus Christ: one faith, and one baptism.\

Now at this point you might find it odd that no other elements are linked with the Father. But there is a good reason for this.

/The Father is over all. He is sovereign over all things. \

He sent Jesus. Jesus submitted to the will of the Father.

/In this way, the Father is over the Lord Jesus Christ.\

And one day, after the Father has put all things in subjection under Christ's feet, the Son will be subjected to the Father – the One who subjected all things to Him. *1 Cor 15:22-28*

/The Father is also over the Holy Spirit\ . The Father sent the Lord Jesus Christ on a mission to redeem lost sinners. And then the Lord Jesus Christ sent the Spirit with the mission to establish the body of Christ.

/The Father is also through all. He operates through the Spirit who carries out His will on earth.\

/The Father is also in all. He is in Christ, and Christ is in us. \

Eph 1:22-23

22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Let's continue with the two elements of our unity that are associated with the Spirit.

One body:

/The one body is the body of Christ. \

Rom 12:4-5

4 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

/We saw in Ephesians 1:23 that the church is His body.\

/That unity of the one body is forged by baptism – the baptism by the Spirit. Each and every believer in Christ is baptized – placed into and permanently identified with – into Christ by means of the Holy Spirit.\ Look at 1 Corinthians 12:12-13:

1 Cor 12:12-13

12 For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

/We have all been baptized into the one body of Christ – the church.\

I hope you are starting to see the tremendous interlinking between these different elements of our unity. For example, there is one body. It is the body of Christ. That body is formed by the baptism of the Spirit. We'll see more of this as we go along.

One hope of our calling:

/The one hope of our calling is the resurrection of the body to life eternal when Christ appears for us. This is the hope of our inheritance laid up in heaven for us. \

As we close, let me show this to you in the epistles:

We begin in chapter 1 of Ephesians.

Eph 1:18

18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

Of course it's no accident that we find Paul introducing these subjects - the body of Christ and the hope of our calling, in the first chapter of the book of Ephesians.

Rom 8:23-25

23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. 24 For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is

not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

/Paul speaks of our hope, and identifies it as our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.\

1 Thess 4:13-18

13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Unlike the unbeliever, we have great hope.

/ At the coming of the Lord, when He descends from heaven with a shout, the dead in Christ shall rise. This is the resurrection of the body. \

Then we who are alive will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.
/Our bodies will be transformed into bodies like His.\

John speaks of this hope too, in his first epistle:

1 John 3:1-3

See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Thus we end today where we began, with the writings of John.

Next Sunday, we will examine the two elements of our unity which Paul associates here with the Lord Jesus Christ: one faith, and one baptism.

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/The nature of our union with Christ is that of mutual indwelling, John 17:21-23.\

We are in Christ, and Christ is in us.

/We are in Christ:\

1 Cor 1:30-31

30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, 31 so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD."

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Gal 3:27-28

27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

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/And Christ is in us:\

Col 1:25-27

25 Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, 26 that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, 27 to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

/And, as we saw in John 17:21-23, the purpose of this unity is to reveal the glory of Christ and the love of God to the world.\

5 Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, 6 so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7 Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God. 8 For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers, 9 and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written,

*"THEREFORE I WILL GIVE PRAISE TO YOU AMONG THE GENTILES,
AND I WILL SING TO YOUR NAME."*

That leads to the next question, which is this:

/How do we preserve the unity of the body of Christ? Negatively, what things disrupt or undermine the unity of the brethren?\

Today I will sketch this out in broad terms. The epistles go into great detail.

/We begin with the negative. The deeds of the flesh create discord in the body.\

In Paul's day, the church at Corinth was nearly destroyed by this.

1 Cor 1:10-12

10 Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. 11 For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. 12 Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ."

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And again:

1 Cor 3:2-4

2 I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able,

3 for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? 4 For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men?

Now for the positive.

/First, this unity is preserved by being of one mind , holding to the “one faith” – the word of God, the mind of Christ.\

Phil 1:27

27 Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

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/Second, the exercise of spiritual gifts strengthens the unity of the body.\

1 Cor 12:4-7

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. 6 There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. 7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

All the three members of Trinity contribute to the fruitful exercise of our gifts.

/Third, the lifeblood, the bond of our unity is the love of God, John 17:23.\

Col 3:12-14

12 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

/Fourth, the Lord's Supper is designed to express the unity of the body.\

Let's get ready now to celebrate the Lord's Supper.