

## One Church: One Baptism

### **Ephesians 4:1 through Ephesians 4:6 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup>I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, <sup>2</sup>with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup>endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup>*There is* one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; <sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.

### **Series Introduction:**

What does God have in store for Greater Friendship? What does God want to accomplish through Greater Friendship? I cannot tell you that I have a vision for us just yet. Right now, I do know is this: we won't get anywhere divided.

So this seven week series is designed to draw all of us in. We want to cross barriers. We want our hearts on one accord. We want to create singleness of purpose and unity of spirit. We must become One Church in Jesus Christ.

In Ephesians 4 Paul tells the believers about seven things that are unique in the church. We will examine each one in hopes that they will turn all of our heads in the same direction and cause our eyes to all behold the same glory of God.

In the first week we began with One Church: One Body. In that message, we were encouraged to acknowledge the head. We were also encouraged to accept one another. Lastly, we were told to find our place in the body. Next, we talked about One Church: One Spirit. In that message we learned some critical truths about the Holy Spirit. We talked about his purpose, his presence, and his power. Then, we talked about One Church: One Hope. We learned that we have one eternal hope in Jesus Christ. Two weeks ago, we discussed One Church: One Lord. We learned that we have one Lord who is master, owner, and authority to the church. Last week, we talked about One Church: One Faith. Primarily we learned that we needed to take our faith out of the box. Our faith is flawless and limitless when activated by the word of God and it can release the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Today as we near the end of this series we will talk about One Church: One Baptism.

### **Introduction**

Baptisms are very special in the church. Unlike our regular Sunday services or the ordinance of the Lord's Supper that we observe on a monthly basis, baptisms are spontaneous. Baptisms are also very meaningful for the family of the candidate as well

as the church family. As a church we watch and witness the baptism in faith, believing our God has added another soul to our church family. For the families of the candidates, there is glowing approval and joy that comes for knowing their loved ones have made a life changing decision for Christ.

Everything about our baptisms is special. The special clothes we wear will only be worn together once in our lives. The words that are spoken over us are spoken specifically for us only once in our lives. Let's not forget that baptisms are the only time we will sing "Take Me to the Water" and have everyone crowd around to watch with great anticipation.

Baptisms are indeed special. But behind the scenes, in the spirit world that can't be seen with the naked eye, God is at work through the Holy Spirit. And it is his role in baptism that causes Paul to say, "there is one baptism". We will talk about One Baptism That Saves Us and One Baptism That Changes Us, then conclude for the day.

### **We have one baptism that saves us.**

How does a person become "saved"? I wonder sometimes if we talk about salvation enough. Many times I think we focus more on church membership than the actual act of salvation. It's easy to get caught up in what we see or do versus what happens in the spirit. This is also why evangelism has been a bit of a challenge for us as well.

Let me explain.

The routine usually goes: a sermon is preached. A non-member or a visitor hears the sermon and becomes compelled to join the church. We issue an invitation at the conclusion of the message. They come forward in response to the appeal and we receive them into our membership. If they have been baptized before, we bring them in under Christian Experience. If not, they are candidates for water baptism. We set a day, we fill the pool, we baptize them and that's it.

Does that sound about right?

Well there is more to this process than meets the eye. Actually, there is one baptism and it occurs in the spirit, not in the water. The scriptures reveal true spiritual baptism occurs at the point of salvation. Let's look at the scriptures and gain an understanding together.

Write this down.

### **Romans 10:9 (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup>that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

At the center of our salvation is the confession that Jesus is Lord. There is One Lord who brings us into One Faith with One Baptism.

### **1 Corinthians 12:3 (NKJV)**

<sup>3</sup>Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

We can *call* Jesus Lord but that alone will not insure our salvation. It is our *confession* of his Lordship that brings us into the family of faith. Remember he told us in Matthew 7:21 that not everyone who calls him Lord would enter into the kingdom. Instead it would be those who do the will of the Father. If Jesus is Lord, then we must follow his commandments.

Paul says we can't truly say that Jesus is Lord without the revelation of the Holy Spirit. Confession then involves a complete acknowledgement of the lordship of Jesus over our lives in every area. Confession involves the submission of our lives and will to the authority of our Lord. The Holy Spirit is present at the point of salvation. It is the conviction of the Holy Spirit, the eternal truth of the word, and the witness of the saints that God uses to save people.

Do you remember how last week we talked about activating your faith? I shared with you how "Faith in God is a spiritual function. It is not a mental exercise. Faith happens in the inner man. Because faith is spiritual, it has the potential to accomplish whatever God ordains for it to do. Faith comes by hearing and hearing the word of God. So when God speaks, our faith is activated. Our faith releases the Holy Spirit to operate on our behalf."

At the point of hearing the Gospel message, we are also spiritually being drawn by the invitation of the Holy Spirit. Once our faith is engaged by believing the word, the power of the Holy Spirit is released in our lives to move us to confession, to save us, to regenerate us, to seal us, and to place us within the body of Christ. All of this work is done in the spirit.

*Gospel Example:*

*A believer is witnessing to a non-believing friend. This believer is saved and covered by the Holy Spirit. The believer has the witness of his lifestyle and story, as well as the witness of the word of God. While the believer is sharing the word of God in the physical, the Holy Spirit is confirming the word in the heart of the non-believer. If the believer is able by the word to activate the faith of the non-believer, the Holy Spirit will cover him and bring him into the body of Christ. Of he rejects the offer of salvation, his rejection is aimed directly at the Holy Spirit. He has blasphemed the Holy Spirit.*

### **1 Corinthians 12:13 (NKJV)**

<sup>13</sup>For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

By one Spirit, not water, are we all baptized into one body.

### **Galatians 3:26 through Galatians 3:29 (NKJV)**

<sup>26</sup>For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>27</sup>For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. <sup>28</sup>There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup>And if you *are* Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Remember, John the Baptist told us ...

### **Matthew 3:11 through Matthew 3:12 (NKJV)**

<sup>11</sup>I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>12</sup>His winnowing fan *is* in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

Jesus was to baptize the church with the Holy Spirit and with fire, not water. So what about water baptism? Why do we do it? What significance does it have? Well, I'm glad you asked. Water baptism is a direct commandment from the Lord. This commandment makes it one of the two ordinances of the church. He told us as we go forward making disciples we are to baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. This water baptism is a public acknowledgement of our changed life. It is an outward expression of an inward change. It is a public profession of faith.

In Bible times, baptism didn't occur within the closed doors and confines of the church building. They didn't have church buildings. The church met from house to house. So

when it was time to baptize new believers they had to go to open public bodies of water like lakes, ponds, and rivers. You may recall that in Acts 8 Philip witnessed to a Eunuch. As they passed by a body of water the eunuch said “there is water, what prevents me from being baptized?” Philip responded by saying “only that you believe.” They got off the chariot, went into the water, and baptized the eunuch on the spot.

A youth minister once told me of how he had a youth outreach that was a pool party. After the sharing the Gospel, some teenagers accepted Jesus as Lord of their lives. So he went into the pool and baptized them in front of all of their friends. In these public baptisms other people would see the baptism and be witnesses to the open profession of faith. From that point on the believer was identified throughout the community as a follower of Jesus Christ. At that moment a new believer literally became a witness for Christ.

But baptism has another symbolism that is very powerful in the church. It is the symbolism of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That brings us to our second point.

### **We have one baptism that changes us.**

#### **Romans 6:1 through Romans 6:4 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup>What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup>Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? <sup>3</sup>Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

<sup>4</sup>Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

#### **Romans 6:12 through Romans 6:14 (NKJV)**

<sup>12</sup>Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.

<sup>13</sup>And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. <sup>14</sup>For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

True baptism takes place in the spirit. It is there in the spirit where we lay down our old lives. In order for us to be regenerated, that which was first generated must be done away with, then generated again. At the point of baptism, somebody has to die.

When we are spiritually baptized, we are brought into the body of Christ. We are covered by his blood. We are birthed in the Holy Spirit just as Jesus was. We are equipped with miraculous power just as Jesus was. But we are also crucified just as Jesus was. In order for us to be renewed in the spirit, the old man must be done away with and a new man is made in his place.

Remember ...

**2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV)**

<sup>17</sup>Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

What happened to the old creature? He died. In the act of water baptism we acknowledge the symbolism of death, burial, and resurrection like this:

As we enter the water it is symbolic of the death of Jesus.

As we are immersed in the water, it is symbolic of the burial of Jesus. But he didn't stay dead.

As we come out of the water, it is symbolic of his resurrection.

This act also pertains to our faith and salvation through the same symbolism.

As we enter the water it is symbolic of the death of our "old selves".

As we are immersed in the water, it is symbolic of the burial of our "old selves".

As we come out of the water it is symbolic of our new life in Jesus Christ.

One of the biggest problems we have in the church is the fact that some people went into the water a sinner and came up a wet sinner. We have some people who refuse to die to their old ways. We have people who refuse to change. This is one of the biggest barriers for the church. We can't become One Church and get on one accord because we have too many members who haven't died to sin.

We have people who haven't died to their own ideas. We haven't died to our worldly desires. We haven't crucified our attitudes. We haven't killed ungodly motives. Some of us haven't crucified our tongues yet. We seem to always say things that hurt other people. We speak words that are divisive. When folks get hurt by the things we say, we are perfectly content to not speak to each other for weeks, months, or even years.

On the other hand, when people say hurting things to us, our pride gets the best of us and we get all bent out of shape.

All it takes is one time for us to not get acknowledged and we'll stop coming to church. All it takes is one time for us to not get our way and we will shut ourselves off from the rest of the church.

Some of us get prideful in our flesh and won't speak to certain other members because they are beneath us. Some of us get selfish in our flesh and refuse to help others.

It's our flesh that keeps us arguing over petty issues.

It's our flesh that tells us not to participate in ministry.

It's our flesh that doesn't want to be inconvenienced for the kingdom.

It's our flesh that causes us to hold grudges against one another.

Once we are baptized by the Holy Spirit, all of that foolishness has to die.

The lying has to die. You can't just keep coming to the church telling bold faced lies. At some point you are going to have to be honest about your mess. Some of us won't be getting over our faults until we confess to people who can help us. Don't lie just to save face. That part of you has to die.

The lusting has to die. You can't keep coming to church to check people out. Stop staring at peoples' bodies. Stop trying to hug up on people to get your thrill on. Have some dignity about yourself and stop wearing revealing clothing to try to get people to chase after you. Church is no place for your lust. You have to kill it.

The pride has to die. In this church everybody is a servant. Stop craving the spotlight. Stop trying to get social points by telling people how close you are to the pastor. Stop wearing your past accomplishments like a badge of honor. Paul said for all his accomplishments he counted them as dung.

The worldly thinking has to die. In the kingdom, we can't solve problems the way the world does. If your brother or sister has hurt your feelings, Jesus said go to them, not stay away from them and gossip about them. We don't have a "get you back" system like the world does. This is the church and we don't operate like your social groups, fraternities, sororities, or your lodge. We are in this world, but we are not of this world.

The judgmental dirt slinging has to die. I know that many of you have known each other for many years and you have plenty of dirt on each other. Once we are in Christ we are new creatures and we are all a work in progress. So looking narrowly down our noses at people, because we know what they did, is fruitless in the church. It's divisive. It's defamation of character. It's evil. And it has to die.

The immorality has to die. If you are married and are with someone other than your spouse, or if you are single and with someone else's spouse, you are in adultery. If both of you are not married but you are still having a physical relationship you are in fornication. For married people, Paul said every man has his own gift from God. For single people he said it's better to marry than to burn.

Let me be clear about this: homosexuality is a sin. People are on television and in our communities blatantly displaying their alternative lifestyles. We cannot discriminate against them by law, but God will discriminate at the judgment.

You see, once we are baptized into Christ, sin should not be allowed to reign in our bodies. The power of sin must be overthrown. We should not yield ourselves to be used by our desires. We can't allow our hands to be used to steal from people once we are baptized in the Holy Spirit. We can't allow our feet to walk us to the state store. We can't let our lusts and desires drive us to the wrong places at the wrong times. We can't allow our mouths to bare false witness against our brothers and sisters. We can't allow our necks to get so stiff that we won't obey the Lord. We can't allow our heads to get so high that we are consumed by pride and arrogance.

The sin has to die. The iniquity has to be buried. We cannot stay the way we were before we came to Christ.

### **1 Corinthians 6:9 through 1 Corinthians 6:11 (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup>Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, <sup>10</sup>nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup>And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

Paul is talking to the church and he says, they use to be sinners. They use to do wrong. They use to be immoral. But they were washed. They were sanctified. They were justified. We too must become regenerated. Our minds must be renewed. Our ways must change. We must be molded into his image. We need to be washed. We need to be sanctified. We need to be justified. And all of this happens in one baptism performed by the Holy Spirit.

By his Spirit, God wants to resurrect the dead places in our lives. But we can't experience a personal resurrection until we have had a personal crucifixion.

If you are looking for a resurrection in your finances, somebody has to die. It's either you who are wasting your money, or the enemy who is devouring your money.

If you are looking for a resurrection in your family, somebody has to die. Somebody is full of the devil and needs to be crucified.

If you are looking for a resurrection on your job, somebody has to die. You need to get out the word of God and slay in the spirit until your change comes.

Young people if you want better grades in school so you can represent the kingdom, somebody has to die. Kill that cell phone, kill that television, and kill that Xbox. Sit down and get your work done.

If we want a resurrection in the church somebody has to die. We are going to have to take out the word of God which is the sword of the Spirit and slay some people. We are going to have to cut some people. We are going to have to crucify some people.

Members who have bad attitudes have to die. Members who never have anything good to say have to die. Members who won't obey the word of truth have to die. Members who keep warring over petty issues have to die. Members who continue to gossip have to die.

If you don't know how to die, Jesus is your example.

He died to self edification when he stripped off his glory.

He died to worldly desires when he was tempted in the wilderness.

He died to popularity when his friends forsook him.

He died to physical pleasure when they beat him with a cat of nine tails.

He died for sin when they hung him high and stretched him wide.

He died so that we might live.

He died till the sin debt was paid.