

The Unity of the Spirit and the Unity of the Faith

by H.J. Vine

The unity of the Spirit and the unity of the faith are two distinct aspects of Christian unity, to be kept and maintained through love, peace, and the knowledge of the Son of God.

Scripture: Psalm 133:1, Daniel 12:2, Ephesians 4:3, Ephesians 4:13

Topics: "Church Unity", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

H.J. Vine preaches on the importance of maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, emphasizing that this unity is not to be created but diligently preserved. The unity of the Spirit involves practical oneness among believers, transcending denominational divides and emphasizing love for all saints. Additionally, the unity of the faith is a goal for believers to attain, growing in knowledge of the Son of God and deepening their fellowship with Him.

Transcript

1. "Using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3).
2. "Until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (Ephesians 4:13).

THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT--It is important to notice that we are not told to make this unity, but to use diligence to keep it. The unity already is; but in a practical way--not in strife, but in the uniting bond peace, we are to walk accordingly, in love to "all the saints." There are various influences at work to mar this, but "the uniting bond of peace "is the practical answer to them all. The authority of the Lord, and the gracious direction and ministry of our exalted Head, will be abundantly realized by those who thus endeavour, apart from sects and schools, to keep the unity of the Spirit.

THE UNITY OF THE FAITH, in verse 13, is another matter. The activity of the gifts has the edifying of the body of Christ in view to this end: "Until we all arrive at the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God." We must not confound the two. This is objective, whereas the unity of the Spirit is more subjective, involving the vital oneness of the members of the body of Christ. The unity of the Faith is something which the saints are to come to, or "arrive at," in connection with the knowledge of the Son of God.

He has made a perfect revelation, and in this, known in Him alone--in Him whose words, and ways, and works, have so fully and blessedly declared the Father, His own become one in the Father and the Son. Here indeed we need to advance, to grow in the excellent knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, the blessed Son of God, into the fellowship of whom God has graciously called us.

THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT--Much has been said as to this which leaves the impression on the mind that it is something to be made or something to be attained to, instead of something to be kept, as we have said, in a practical way--in "the uniting bond of peace." We must cease from denominating beloved saints of God by party and divisive names which are a shame to us. The practice is not only a careless one, but a sinful one; for we are all members of Christ's body, and we must acknowledge no other membership, even if others do. Let us then, for the sake of the One who loves all His own perfectly, speak and think of one another becomingly, and be ashamed of these party names which have no right to exist, for Christ cannot be divided. This will greatly help towards practical unity in the bond of peace. The endeavouring we are exhorted to is on this line. We are to be "using diligence," but special effort having some favoured party in view is not here contemplated. Our efforts must be governed by the truth in regard to the whole position, or they will militate against the unity of the Spirit.

It has been said, "The unity of the Spirit is that which is already formed and embraces all the members of Christ," and again, It is "the common place which pertains to all the children of God" (W.K.).

Another wrote, "It is not only abstractedly, but actually one, forming one body, putting each member in its place in the body"; also, on my side, "If love to all the saints is not present in my spirit, I break (the unity) . . . while keeping it up in form"; for it is "not similarity of sentiment, but the oneness of the members of the body of Christ established by the Holy Ghost" (J.N.D.). Where healthful diligence is in activity as to this established unity, and also advance is being made in regard to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of our blessed Lord and Saviour as the Son of God, rich results will necessarily follow for God's glory.

"UNITY"--Twice only is the word found in our New Testament; in Ephesians 4:3, and 13; and but once in the Old Testament. There it is significantly used in the last Song of Degrees but one; just before the Lord is blessed in the sanctuary, and His blessing flows out of Zion (Ps. 134). Mark the Spirit's words: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity (Ps. 133). It is like the precious ointment which is not only upon the Head, but which reaches to all connected with Him, whilst the fragrant perfume of it pervades all around. It is also like the dew of Hermon's height: descending, distilling, and refreshing Zion. No wonder we read, "There the Lord commands the blessing--even eternal life!" It is not surprising that this is the only place eternal life is mentioned in the O.T. except Daniel 12:2.

"Behold how good and how pleasant it is for BRETHREN TO DWELL TOGETHER IN UNITY."

Shall we not seek this with diligence? It is to be our portion for ever in the Father's house, with Him who is the Firstborn among many brethren.

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