

# The Sevenfold Hymn of Unity – *Ephesians 4:4-6*

**Introduction** – There is a unity which exists in the Christian church which Paul pleads with the Ephesians to strive to keep in the bond of peace (v3). That unity is grounded in what God has done – already done. This unity is described in a sevenfold hymn; it is what all believers, by definition, have in common. Practical expressions of unity come forth from these foundational features of our faith.

**The Text** – *"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."*

**Trinitarian Unity** – All three Persons of the Godhead are involved in the unity that is ours. This makes sense as we are being brought into the unity that already exists in the Triune God (John 16:26, 17:10, 23, 2 Cor 13:14).

**One Body, Spirit, Hope** (v4) – There are many members, but only one body, and that body has been brought to life by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit brings the members to life; but the Spirit has, in doing so, brought the body to life as a whole. That Spirit brought to life the dead man (think of Pentecost), reconciling Jew and Gentile and by extension all other divisions. The Spirit assures our hope (Eph 1:13-14) that we will be perfected as the bride of Christ that we should be *"holy and without blame"* (Eph 1:4), that we would be *"conformed to the image of His Son"* (Rom 8:29), and that this hope would be used by Him to accomplish just that (1 John 3:1-3).

**One Lord, Faith, Baptism** (v5) – There is only one way of salvation and that is the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). Faith alone in Christ is the instrument and baptism is the declaration by God that we are His, set apart, cleansed, and brought into the body.

**One God and Father** (v6) – There is one body, but all who are in Christ are adopted children who have direct access to their heavenly Father in the name of Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Because of this there is one Christian family embraced by one Father *"who is above all and through all and in you all."* God is supremely above all, He is *"through all"* or pervading the whole life of the church, working in each believer, and He is in you all as Christ said (John 14:23).

**Observed Divisions?** – This is not "pie-in-the-sky" theology, and Paul was no idealist. He knew and fought the divisions that already existed in the newly created churches (i.e. 1 Cor 1:10-17). The first application in Ephesians was the Jew-Gentile union in Jesus Christ, but there are obvious applications for schismatic denominationalism for us today as well. There are godly distinctions that exist in time and space (for instance, we can't attend the church that was meeting here 100 years ago, or the church at Ephesus in the first century). It also means that the OT church is the same church as the NT church. Even now, there is only one temple but it does not have a single address on earth. Natural distinctions will come due to issues of maturity and varieties of struggles to grow up *"into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man"* (Eph 4:13). Just like watching your children grow up, this seems to be a built-in feature for the church over time. Sometimes the knees really hurt; but it might simply be growing pains.

## Endeavoring to Keep this Unity Requires –

**Avoiding Contemporary Provincialism** – Your "church" didn't begin in 1993, or at the Reformation, and the so-called Dark Ages were actually full of faithful, lively work the Spirit was doing in the church. In a culture of youth-worship, we need to learn to respect our elders. At the same time, we should expect and long for more growth, more maturity, more insight and we must avoid an idolatrous view of the "good ol' days."

**Pursuing Doctrinal Unity** – Attempts at keeping the unity of the faith often are done by denying the importance of good, hard, Bible study, teaching and application. But this is quite the opposite of what Paul was doing; his doctrine drove his application to keep the unity. Maturity is a process, but we must pursue the process even when it is hard.

**Local Church Membership** – There is only one holy, catholic church, but you are required to know your local elders (1 Pet 5:2-3) and they are required to give an account for your soul (Heb 13:17). This is one of God's means to keep the unity. It protects us from an individualistic spirit.

**One of Many Prickly Present Applications** – Sometimes, applications of keeping the unity causes division. We invite all baptized believers to the Table (because we believe the Lord does). We do so believing that this is an application of "keeping the unity," something Paul was fighting for in his admonitions in 1 Cor 11. In doing so, we find ourselves at odds with other local bodies we otherwise love. We will find ourselves at odds, but we must do so with the character of vv1-3.

**Finally, Back to the Character of Endeavoring** (vv1-3) – Keeping the context, unity will only be kept with the Christ-like and Christ-imposed characteristics of lowliness, gentleness, longsuffering and such.