

## THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

**“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3)**

Note “the unity of the Spirit” is to be “kept”. Unity between believers does not come from man, it comes from the Holy Spirit. This unity, of course, is experienced in the church. No one can “join” the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. You have to be “added” to the church by God (Acts 2:47). The Holy Spirit is also involved in this process **“For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were all give the one Spirit to drink” (1 Cor. 12:13).**

The Holy Spirit “creates” this unity, but it is up to us to “keep” it.

Take, for example, the case of Philemon and Onesimus. Their story is found in the Paul’s letter to Philemon. Philemon was Paul’s dear friend and fellow worker. He lived in Colosse. Onesimus was his slave and apparently stole something from his master and ran away to Rome. Paul was a prisoner in Rome at this time and converted Onesimus to Christ. The name “Onesimus” means “profitable.” Formerly Onesimus had been “useless” but as a Christian he was now “profitable” to both Paul and Philemon (vs. 11).

Paul insisted that Onesimus return to his master, no longer as a slave, but better than a slave as a dear brother (vs. 16). If Onesimus owed his master anything Paul promised to pay the debt personally (vs. 18).

The distance between Colosse and Rome is over 800 miles. Yet, when Onesimus was baptized into Christ he immediately became united spiritually with his master who was many miles away. It was not going to be easy to “keep” this unity. There were many barriers that would have to be overcome or broken down. That’s why Paul wrote: **“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:2,3).**

An even more serious challenge involved “keeping the unity of the Spirit” between Jews and Gentiles. Paul wrote: **Therefore remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called ‘uncircumcision’ by those who call themselves ‘the circumcision’ (that done in the body by the hands of men) – Remember that at that time you were separated from Christ, excluded from the citizenship in Israel for foreigners to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made of the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility . . .” (Eph. 2:11-14).**

The problem between Jews and Gentiles was especially serious in Ephesus because the Temple of Diana was located there. This pagan temple was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The artisans who made silver images of this many breasted goddess accused Paul of discrediting her and robbing her of her divine majesty (Acts 19:27). They created a riot that affected the whole city.

We gain insight into the depraved life of these pagans by these words Paul to the saints in Ephesus: **“So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more” (Eph. 4:17-19).**

The question is, how will we “keep the unity of the Spirit” in our own lives. We live in a divided world. The division involves husbands and wives, parents and children, neighbors and friends. If you are a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus, the minute one of your enemies is saved you are automatically united with one another in the Family of God. Will you keep that unity? Will you have the courage to overcome your fleshly impulse to argue and hate, or will you do what Philemon did and welcome the ones who have wronged you like a beloved brother in Christ?

Please **“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”**