

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

BIBLE TEXT : Ephesians 3:14-21; 4:1-16.

LESSON 402 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Ephesians 3:14-21

¹⁴ For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

¹⁵ Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

¹⁶ That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

¹⁷ That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

¹⁸ May be able to comprehend with all saints what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

¹⁹ And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

²⁰ Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

²¹ Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Ephesians 4:1-16

¹ I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

² With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

³ Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

⁴ *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

⁵ One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

⁶ One God and Father of all, who

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Kneeling in Prayer

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians is recorded a prayer. Paul prayed for the church at Ephesus. As a missionary, Paul had visited there and reasoned with the people (**Acts 18:19** ¹⁹ And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.). On Paul's third missionary trip he spent two years at Ephesus (**Acts 19:10** ¹⁰ And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.) preaching to the people. He was interested in them and not only wrote a letter to them but also prayed for them. "I bow my knees unto the Father." This shows the position in which Paul prayed. He was very earnest when he prayed. To bend one's knees before God shows humility and worship. Some people would not think of kneeling to pray, but there are many instances given in the Bible of people kneeling to pray. Jesus Himself knelt in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. Before Christ was crucified He knelt and prayed, "Not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:41, 42).

The Psalmist said, "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker" (Psalm 95:6). Daniel knelt upon his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before God (**Daniel 6:10** ¹⁰ Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime). This is not the only way to pray but it is a good way. On his knees, one feels very close to God and has faith that God will answer his prayer. The Bible tells of a time when Jesus will reign here upon earth and every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess to God (**Romans 14:11** ¹¹ For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. **Isaiah 45:23** ²³ I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth *in* righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.).

Spiritual Strength

Paul prayed for those who were already saved. His desire was for them to receive more blessings from the Lord and to be made strong in the Lord. He prayed that they would be strengthened in the "inner man" — the spirit of a person. It meant to be strong spiritually. In II Corinthians 4:16 we read, "The inwards man is renewed day by day." When one wants a strong body he exercises and eats carefully. When one wants to be strong spiritually he must be just as diligent in feeding on heavenly manna and spiritual meat, and exercising himself in the things taught by God. By prayer, by faith, by reading the Bible and applying what he reads to his life, he grows strong. One does not need to be weak or doubting but can grow strong in Christ day by day. The Lord will help him and give him power to be strong in the Lord. God is able to do even more than we can ask or think. It has been said that our "think" is bigger than our "ask" but God's "able" is bigger than either.

is above all, and through all, and in you all.

⁷ But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

⁸ Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

⁹ (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

¹⁰ He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

¹¹ And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

¹² For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

¹³ Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

¹⁴ That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

¹⁵ But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

¹⁶ From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Riches

There is no limit to the riches in Christ. They are not money or jewels but precious blessings from the Lord: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." When one has Jesus in his heart he has a wealth of good things. Love comes in when Jesus comes into the heart. One has that love first, then there are other blessings added. When the love of Christ is in our hearts, we love Him. "We love him, because he first loved us" (I John 4:19). "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (I John 3:14). "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). One who has Jesus in his heart loves not only Christ and His people but also loves his neighbours and his enemies (**Matthew 22:39** ³⁹ And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. **Luke 6:27** ²⁷ But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,). No wonder Paul told the Ephesians that the love of Christ "passeth knowledge." We cannot understand it but we can have it.

The love of Jesus comes first into the heart and then there is room for the "fullness of God." The Lord has so many blessings in store for His people that it is hard to comprehend them all. One by one God gives them new blessings and they understand more the great riches of Christ.

High Calling

To be a Christian and a follower of Jesus is a high calling. Paul reminded the Ephesians to walk worthy of that calling. Paul told the people of Ephesus how to keep the love of God in their hearts. Paul's words were not to the Ephesians only; we also can profit by them. A Christian should walk "with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love." That may sound as if it is hard to be a Christian, but with the love of God in his heart a Christian wants to do those things. The love of God causes a Christian to do those things. If one really loves Jesus, he does not lift himself above others — he is humble. If he really loves Jesus, he does not quarrel and want his own way — he is meek.

Holiness

"Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Endeavouring means trying and working. It means that there are times when one must put forth an effort to keep the unity of the Spirit. Unity means oneness, and that is God's plan for His people. Jesus prayed for His followers, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us" (John 17:21). "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me" (John 17:23). Jesus prayed also that His followers would be sanctified (**John 17:17** ¹⁷ Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.), which would bring unity and delivery from the Adamic nature. It is God's plan for Christians to be like Christ and walk "in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:24).

In Revelation 19:8 we read of those who will go to be with Jesus at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. They make up the Bride of Christ, and "to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." It is important for one to be righteous and holy. In I Peter 1:16 we read: "It is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." In Hebrews 12:14 we find that without holiness one shall not see the Lord.

Unity

Paul gave a reason for this unity or oneness: "For we are members one of another" (Ephesians 4:25). Paul uses the word "One" seven times in this chapter to show how perfect the unity of believers should be. There is one God. There is one Lord Jesus Christ. There is one Spirit, one faith, one baptism. There is one hope of all who are saved, and that is to spend eternity with Jesus. There is one body of all the Christians, and that is the Church, known as the body of Christ. It is made up of people from all lands, of all nationalities, and of all races. The Church is made up of believers, both Jew and Gentile. It is likened to a "whole family."

Gifts

To everyone in the family of God is given a gift, or a talent. Everyone cannot sing well. Everyone cannot preach, "but unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." Each person must give an account to God for the way he has used his gift. Some may want to do the work that is given to others, but we must each one do his own work. How confusing it would be if everyone stood at once to preach! There would be no congregation to listen. There may be more than one minister in the church but each one has his work to do and each one takes his turn. "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints" (I Corinthians 14:33).

One Body

As each one does his part there is a growth in Christ and we become more like Him who is our Head. The Church can be likened to a body. There is a need for the hands as well as the feet; so in the body of Christ, there is a need for singers and teachers as well as for ministers and evangelists. Each must faithfully do his part in order to make up a co-ordinated body, the "perfect man." Consider how it would be if the hand decided it wanted to do the work of the foot! So it is when someone tries to do the work that has been given to someone else. Consider how it would be if one foot went in one direction but the other tried to go in the opposite direction. So it is when everyone does not work in unity and love. God has made it possible for all to live and work in harmony, when they have the love of God in their heart and are sanctified wholly, when they trust God and obey His Word. Each one goes to make up the body of Christ — "the whole body fitly joined together."

QUESTIONS

1. What missionary to Ephesus do we study in this lesson?
2. How do we know that Paul knelt to pray for the Church?
3. Name some others recorded in the Bible who knelt to pray.
4. What can one do to grow spiritually?
5. Why should one grow spiritually?
6. Name the seven times in this lesson that Paul used the word "one".
7. Quote some other passages of Scripture in regard to holiness.
8. How is the Church likened to the body of Christ?
9. What is unity?
10. How can people have unity?