

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

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THERE IS ONE

“I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are.” ... “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.” (John 17.11, 20-23 NASB)

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. (Ephesians 4.1-6 NASB)

For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus.... (1 Timothy 2.5 ASV)

There is one word in common with all these verses and that is the word *one*. The number *one* is the number of *unity*. As a prime number, it cannot be divided by any other number, and as such, is God's number, for it refers to the unity of God, who cannot be divided. There is only one God! We could say that it is God's purpose in His Son, first, to bring His people into oneness and then, eventually, to bring all of mankind, even all creation, into oneness. Glory, as creation has never seen or experienced, will break forth when perfect unity or oneness is achieved. Glory and oneness go hand in hand. When there is oneness, there is glory. When there is glory, there is oneness. This is seen very clearly in Jesus' prayer to His Father: **The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity.** Glory perfects in unity!

But there is even more, for love is intimately joined with glory and oneness. Being perfected in unity is the height of love. **That they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.** Glory, oneness (unity), and love are inseparable.

Now, God always moves along the line of unity or oneness. Man always moves along the line of disunity or division. Unfortunately, historically that which calls itself the church has adopted man's way and has divided itself along many different lines. We are hard-pressed to declare that the church of our day is one. There is little outward manifestation of unity among the many who call themselves Christians and who gather together along some emphasis, which is stressed by the name of their group, or by the sign on their building, or by the name of their leader.

Some might argue that Jesus said that He came to bring division not to grant peace to the earth (Luke 12.51). This is quite true, for the time from His rejection to His return has been and will be filled with division and much strife. However, in the next age, all this will change as He unites the world under His rule and ushers in true peace with His ambassadors bringing good news to the nations (Matthew 28.19-20). However, the issue at hand is not the unity or oneness of the world but the unity of God's people. Of the apostles, it appears that Paul, who did not know Jesus personally while He walked this earth, is the one who most captured the heart of the oneness of God. In the verses cited above, Paul referred to eight specific aspects of oneness. In his Ephesians epistle, Paul exhorted the saints to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace and then identified the various aspects of this unity. The world may be divided and there may be enmity between people, but this must not be so in the house of God. We are to be ambassadors of peace and reconciliation, and this must begin in the house of God.

First, there is **one body** made up of many members. How can we justify our many divisions along many different lines? Some might say that it is the diversity of the body, but, as Paul declared, it is that Christ has been divided.

Second, there is **one Spirit**. How can we have unity of the Spirit if there is more than one Spirit? Thank God; He gave His Spirit to the body of Christ that we may be one in spirit.

Third, there is **one hope of your calling**. The one body filled with the one spirit of God has a glorious expectation, and that is to be conformed to the image of God's Son, to be like Him, and to be His complement or His fullness, the vessel through which He will head up or sum all things in the heavens and on the earth. Our expectation is to receive immortal life in the next eon and to be conformed to the body of His glory (Philippians 3.21), a body of love.

Fourth, there is **one Lord**. There should be no disagreement with God's people that there is only one Lord, our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us not make men our lord, no matter how godly they might be.

Fifth, there is **one faith**. What faith are we to have? Yes, we are to believe in Jesus and the finished work of His cross, but what is the one faith? It is the very faith of the Son of God Himself. We are to have the one faith of Jesus. Paul declared: **I live by the faith of the Son of God** (Galatians 2.20 BBE/DNT/KJV/WEB). When Christ broke into his life, Paul was overwhelmed with faith and love in Christ Jesus (1Timothy 1.14). It was not his faith; it was the one faith of Christ.

Sixth, there is **one baptism**. In his Colossians epistle, Paul wrote that we have been circumcised by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with Him in baptism (Colossians 2.11-12). Many want to continue debating the issue of baptism, even how many there are; however, Paul declared that there is one baptism. It is the baptism of Christ, just as it is the circumcision of Christ.

Seventh, there is **one God and Father**. It is unfortunate that many theologians have created a multiple God that they often call the triune God. But where in Scripture do we read of such an entity? Why postulate on the essence of God when Scripture plainly tells us that there is one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all? The Son of God is working toward the consummation of the eons at which time **God may be All in all** (1 Corinthians 15.28).

Eighth, there is **one Mediator** between God and men, Christ Jesus, the Man in glory. Why does it seem that so many of God's people have unwittingly placed another man between themselves and God the Father? It is not just the priest but, in many circles, the pastor-teacher who has become the mediator as people lift up their pastor on a pedestal that places him closer to God than they are.

Dear people of God, oneness expresses God's heart of love. We are to be one people in love with one God and one Lord. Let us no longer divide over the things of this earth as man divides. Let us join hearts in our oneness in Christ and preserve the unity of the Spirit. **There is one!**