

In Christ October 8, 2017
Ephesians 1:11-14

11 In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, 12 so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. 13 In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; 14 this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

The Ephesian lesson is that the writer points out key spiritual aspects that they share in common. We have obtained an inheritance. This means - God sent the Son to us to bring us back into a righteous relationship with God. As such, we are God's children, adopted into God's family. Therefore, we get the promise of salvation. This is our destiny. It is accomplished by Christ himself. It is Christ's divine purpose to bring us to God and offer to us the gift of salvation. So, we put our hope on Christ, we live for Christ, we live in Christ. What we do, the physical action that we take on a regular basis, is we praise his glory. The writer points out, emphasizes, what the people share in common; what they have in Christ.

Ephesians is a letter of oneness. It evolves from a question of the relationship between the Jews and the Gentiles. The original church was built upon Jesus and his disciples. They became what we can classify as a church at Pentecost. At that time the church was all Jewish made up of the disciples and the pilgrims (Jews) who traveled to Jerusalem. The faith spread globally. The more it spread, more and more Gentiles became Christians. Rapidly the church reached a point where the Gentile Christians outnumbered the Jewish Christians. The Gentiles began to question why they should keep the Jewish heritage.

Unity exists because all Christians have a common shared belief. We believe in the same God. We have the same Holy Spirit that manifests itself in our lives. We confess that Jesus is the Son of God. We experience baptism. We are all promised the same salvation. Division exists when people value their differences more than they value their common shared belief. Division exists when personal preferences, rituals, traditions, or customs, mean more to the group than what we share in common. Virtually all of conflict resolution boils down to basic principle that we focus on our common shared belief over our differences. The church in Ephesus had two distinct groups who shared a common doctrine that Jesus is the Son of God. They had differences that mainly pertained to keeping the Sabbath and kosher food laws. These differences were important to them. But more important than the differences were the things that hold us together. Church unity comes from faith in God, knowing Christ, and accepting God's gift of salvation. We are all one in the midst of diversity. The question for us all is do we focus on our differences or do we focus on Christ?

The church is a **cosmic body** united as one whole church. There are individuals and local congregations that make up the body of Christ. The cosmic body is faithful individuals that are united with the head of the church - the risen Christ. The cosmic body image is that the people make up the body of Christ with Christ as the head. What we have is human beings that become new and come together and grow together into the body of Christ.

This church is Spirit filled church. Nine years ago I was an outsider coming in. As an outsider coming into the life of this ministry it was easy for me to see it. I told Brenda "the church is so welcoming you can feel it in the air." People within the ministry don't always see it or recognize it because they are used to it. As an outsider with different experiences I saw right

away the warm and caring spirit. This comes from you. As disciples your focus is on Christ Jesus. You are a spirit filled congregation. This is revealed by your care for one another. Recently I was in a conversation with someone that I know that is not associated with your ministry here. The person talked about some of the problems in his church. Then asked me about how well things are going here. I said "great! This is a very loving and caring church. It is a Spirit filled congregation."

I think the main key to understanding what this lesson is all about today is to understand that the church is the Lord's church. In Matthew 16:18 it is stated upon this rock I will build my church. Notice it is Jesus that said "my church." It is the Lord's church. In Ephesians chapter four there is one body and one Spirit...one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God. So, the Bible teaches us that the church is the body of Christ. Today people look for the church of your choice. But that is not the way Christ built the church. That is the way people built the church. What we have, or what we should have, is the church that Christ chooses. I am proud to talk about you whenever I am engaged in a conversation with someone outside of this ministry. That's because you are a loving and caring ministry. You are a Spirit filled church. You are the church that Christ wants and you are the church that Christ built. We are one in Christ.