**Series**: Stirring Up by Way of Reminder

**Title**: Mainchaining Peace

**Scripture**: Ephesians 4:1-6

**Description:** Paul can't get excited about God's Vision on one hand without urging for Unity on the other

# Read Eph 1:22-23 & 3:20-21 & 4:1-10

* **v1** - *the calling with which you were called*: what is that? **1:22-23**; ie God's Vision gives us a purpose and identity - our calling
* v1 - *walk worthy* of the calling - therefore means to live a life which is fitting, that ties-in with Vision - purpose and Identity - Jesus head over all; ... > begins with 4:1-16, #GrowingTogether;
	+ Jesus not only died, but rose; and gave His Spirit to accomplish that victory within individuals. This is the message of Ephesians - handbook of the "Church", i.e. family of redeemed individuals. What Great privilege, Great Identity, Great power at work, Great mission in the world. Church not limited to Sundays anymore than we are limited to Sundays! But we come together on Sundays (just like since the first church) regularly to stir us up, as one body, reignite zeal. To be rediscovering God's Vision, His Holy Word so sufficiently guiding us;

Interestingly, after putting God's Vision before the Ephesians in ch1 to 3, Paul anticipates major hindrance to that Vision.

# New Series

* We want to cement our understanding of God's Vision for His church in terms of Scripture. Repetitive; "*stirring up our minds by way of reminder*" - the need to rewash and recapture
* This week we're going to look at probably the most basic hijack of God's Vision in a local church

# An Urgent Call to Unity (1-3)

What is the first thing on his mind? Follow with me to see the connection between 3:20-4:3; ... What is it? **Dis-unity** among the believers.

It seems Paul can't get excited about God's Vision on the one hand without urging for Unity on the other. This is an urgent call to Unity.

UNITY.

* "Unity" means : sharing identity. shared perspective and belief, common aim, ... to be in agreement;. a strong feeling of closeness or affinity
* So what is "**Unity of the Spirit"** -

Paul uses the same language in his letter to the Philippians

1:27 Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that ..., I may hear ... that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,

2:2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

* both **forward looking**; and **together loving**.
* so that **all the believers in this church** are
single-minded about the Gospel, this glorious News of God's work to bring all Under Christ
and enjoying a strong feeling of closeness and affinity as we move forward in it

**But,... acc. to v3, that can be lost.**

* (Interesting - that the Unity is there - it is accomplished by the Spirit - but it needs to be maintained!
* **APP**: We will not see the *'abundantly more than we ask or think ... acc to the power... glory in church and Jesus'* without "**maintaining Unity of the Spirit"** (3).

An observation about Unity - Degrees of...

* **Unity is the point of God's Vision, isn't it?** Eph 1:10. #UnitingAllThingsUnderChrist
* **Unity is the goal of #GrowingTogether** (4:1-16) : *see 4:13* (another kind of ... everyone 'mature'!).
* So...
	+ ... but point of 4:1-3, **FIRST comes** : Unity of the Spirit. We will remain immature in Faith and epi-Knowledge of the Son of God if we don't "***maintain the unity of the spirit***"
* Now I don't need to spend much time on how to maintain the unity of the Spirit - Firstly because it's right there in v2 -it's very **practical**: (read).

with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,

* Secondly, because : I have already preached on this, in the sermon "**Places of Power - Unity in the Church**".
* Do you remember the Illustration of Pedalling hard: uphill struggle needing 2 pedals working in unison, and handlebars to stabilise: *Walk...* ***2*** *with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love*. I'll just quote a few lines, and give some relevant examples for us (but go and listen again).
	+ **Humility**, When we aren't honoured. *"* we *expect respect, but it doesn't come... - Humility accepts and remains concerned more about respecting others* ".
	+ **Gentleness**, When we are dishonoured. "we have a legitimate reason to rebuke someone for some wrong, Gentleness doesn't seek to harm; Confronts in a gracious way, hoping for restoration.
	+ **Patience** - holding on - a commitment to doing humility and gentleness for the long haul, even suffering for it!
* Without these, we cannot even begin to GrowTogether. Unity will be undermined. **Unity** needs to be ***maintained*** because the flesh is 'sold under sin and weakness'... so, in various spaces,
	+ we will feel disrespected,
	+ we will encounter personal hurt,
	+ and we will lose patience and want give up in frustration, because this keeps on happening

## FCF

* Now this applies to all interactions in the Body, but I'll apply it to the very time at hand - as we talk about Vision and Mission in our church. In fact, that's exactly what Paul was doing in ch1-3.
* To bring the whole church to support *#UnitingAllThingsUnderChrist* can be an uphill battle from the beginning. It's human. Any organisation that wants to be progressive faces resistance. To do this in a new church plant is a no-brainer. But for us to do this in an established church - planted 25 years ago - brings **concerns**/ leads to **: fears**/ leads to: **suspicion**/ leads to: **avoidance** or **opposition**/ - some drive one way and others pull another ... The very thing meant to unite all things under Christ ultimately wedges division.
* Now of course, the easiest is just to remain unchanged, unchallenged, let the routine be. **But that would be disobedience to the Spirit, wouldn't it?**
* So... The Ultimate Unity of all things under Christ, requires the Unity of the Spirit; and the Unity of the Spirit requires **humility**, **gentleness** and **patience** in every corner. The alternative is High-mindedness; Getting fed-up; = Satan's playground
* ... and ...
* we get hijacked from single-mindedness about the **Gospel**; about **God's Will**, about **solidarity with His Mission**.

Paul can't get **excited about God's Vision on the one hand** without **urging for Unity on the other**

In the family of redeemed individuals with Great privilege, Great Identity, Great power at work, Great mission in the world - are nonetheless fair game for conflict - and we mustn't be surprised. We must be ready:

# Pray

**4:1**

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 **eager to maintain** the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

* ***(3) eager***: hurrying up, being diligent
* to ***maintain***: LIT - ***to Guard***; Look at the image: bond of peace - the chains of peace. Peace around us is a chain that locks the unity in. Paul is in chains. A prisoner for the Lord. We need to be in chains too, prisoners of peace for the Lord. We need to do more than mainTAIN the unity - we need to **mainCHAIN** the unity - Quickly pick up that chain and hold it around us.

# Proposition - A Basis for Unity

* Today we're returning to this passage to look at the **Basis for** Unity. in v4-6
* This is **WHY** unity is worthy mainchaining:

4 There is one body and one Spirit-- just as you were called to **the one hope** that belongs to your call-- 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

* The ***One*** ***Hope*** of your Call (that Hope of #UnitingAllThingsUnderChrist) is not a pipe-dream. Because it is not without God's 3-fold provision. Notice this isn't just a random arrangement of things every believer has in common: The translators have helped us see this by dividing the list into 3 verses:

**Proposition: WHY UNITY IS WORTH MAINCHAINING:**

* Mainchain Unity because we not only share a common hope, we also share (4) **One Spirit, (5) One Lord, (6) One Father** : The Trinity. Mainchain Unity among us: because we have the Tri-Unity within us.
* Just let that sink in a bit. You and I and every believer. The basis for **our unity** **is the common inheritance of the Trinity.**
* We share the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit in common. Was that not the prayer of Christ in John 17:20-23, for all those who would believe in the apostles' gospel:

20 "[I ask], 21 that they may all be one, just 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 have sent me.22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one

* The motivation to be United in our progress to the Lord's Vision, is to understand the Trinity's presence and work within us.

**1:3 -** "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" - The Triune God Himself is our Ultimate Blessing!

* Now let's follow each verse - things we need to remember **when the peace-chain starts to shows signs of stress**

## One Body and One Spirit

* **This is about the Church**. cf Jerusalem, that magnificent outpouring of the **One Spirit**, the gift of God to create witnesses of Christ - **His Body** (1:23) **That's what this is about. What we are!**
* The Greek word is Ekklesia - the Called Out Ones
	+ Each believer of the church called out of the world, and placed into this Body
	+ 1 Cor 12: *1Cor 12: In Illustration, comparing to a human body*

God has so arranged the members so that (25) "there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another"

* **APP: when the peace chain starts to shows signs of stress**: **see** one another for **what we are.**

5:29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church,30 because we are members of his body.

* His Body - His composition - How significant; the apple of God's eye;
* A living organism, holy, precious, created by God - cherished by Him; arranged; each member treasured by Him. Bought with His blood. Bearing His Spirit...
* **If Christ so humbly, gently, patiently deals with us - should we not do the same with us?**
* **After all, what is the Spirit doing?** Sanctifying us - we are all a work in progress.
	+ when the peace chain starts to shows signs of stress : **see** one another for **what we are** and remind yourself: ***I too am a work in progress***. The Same Spirit is shared between us, Has sealed us both. Let us walk by the Spirit and let His power have its work in us.

## One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism

* This is about Christ; And specifically, that every believer in this church confesses Him... as Lord
* We Confess: **HE** is the Head. He IS. Matt 28:18 "*All authority in Heaven and On Earth*", "God has highly exalted Him and given him the Name above every name, that at His Name every knee should bow, in Heaven, and on earth, and under the earth". ... God's is uniting all things **Under Christ -** not so?
* Now Paul reminds us ... that we have made that **confession** "Lord" on 2 counts: Firstly: we have confessed Him INWARDLY IN THE HEART: "one faith" - It is Faith alone in Christ alone... and// OUTWARDLY IN THE WORLD: "one baptism". [That's a mark of surrender!]
* Every believer has heard His call to receive His Life, to forsake all and surrendered to Him, not so?
	+ [We look forward to another Baptism service soon - Those who have been baptised in obedience to Christ rejoice to see more souls confessing the same humble obedience! If you have not been baptised as a believer, there is still a public confession He asks you to declare!]
* Now what has this to do with Unity?
* ... **One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism** agrees that (Gal 2:20) ***it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me***. and that (2Cor5:15) ***Christ died for all so that we who live might no longer live for ourselves but for him***
* **APP: when the peace chain starts to shows signs of stress** : remember that it is no longer you who live, but the Lord in and through you
	+ Only One person is worthy to be Lifted Up - One Lord. "*I am not my own, I was bought with a price. What does my Lord want?*"
	+ How amazing that in the deepest heart between two believers, it's not only I who want that, but my brother or sister. We can even confess that to each other! It's so liberating isn't it - and enabling to be humble... gentle... ... patient. Who am I concerned to defend? Me? Christ died for me - I'm only here to advance His Kingdom
* Paul suffered for this. He was a Prisoner for the Lord (1)! In those days Baptism itself earmarked a disciple for suffering - as they aligned themselves with Christ as Lord, and refused to worship Caesar as Lord. But even persecution was worth it.
	+ **Some suffer willingly** **in chains** for the name. **But we all suffer willingly for the chains of peace**. For the sake of bringing all things under one Head - Christ.
	+ What will a community that believes this look like?!

## one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

* God is the ultimate reality. We live, move, and have our being in this God. The only things worth pursuing are the things He advocates. Because whatever agenda we have, if it's antithetical to Him, will come to nothing at best, be destroyed in fire at worst
* But what has this got to do with Believers? This is about God as Father. In **3:14-15** He is ...

the Father, 15 from whom [the whole] family in **heaven** and on **earth** is named [the church 'militant' and 'triumphant']

* He is sovereignly *'over all, through all and in all'* - all situations, stresses, working all things for the Good of us in this conflict!
* **APP: when the peace chain starts to shows signs of stress** : See: **we're** living in the [stressful] moment, but God in His ultimate reality transcends time and space : and this moment finds its meaning in Eternity : we need to rest in Him, entrust everything to Him.
	+ This is my family. "*the One True God is both your God and My God; your Father and My Father"*
	+ ILLUS: Joy of a father when his children are in Harmony!

# Summary

Mainchaining the Unity of the Spirit is a Costly effort. **Our Unity** cost Christ His **Life**! We have to accept that God's offer of unimaginable glory is also a call to significant personal cost. But it is worth it, isn't it?

Blessed be God who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. The Hope of our calling is not a pipe dream - We have in common the **Tri-Unity** of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit among us

4:1 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.