

PTB2-21: Paul's Plan for Peace and Unity in the Church from Ephesians/Colossians.

This message was originally written as a plea for Peace and Unity in the SBC as Chapter 11 in a Bible commentary on the book of Hebrews as "Paul's Plan for Peace and Unity in the SBC from Ephesians and Colossians." It seems to be too late for that now, so it is delivered in 2020 as a plea for peace and unity in the church, since next to doctrine on the Bible as the Word of God, the greatest point of confusion in practice is that of the Church of the firstborn written in heaven, that is the Assembly of all Christian believers. They will never actually assemble now, but will at the Second Coming of Christ. Large mega churches have become meccas to themselves rather than a part of the total movement for the Kingdom of Christ, in part due to the corresponding confusions in the Church on the Forever Kingdom. What Scofield, the criminal and heretic of bad math, adding to and taking away from the Bible, saw as a problem in the local churches where he worked, he compounded rather than helped as he said he wanted to by the demonic veil of the Scofield Reference Bible in 1909 and Scofield theology. (You sceptics will have to admit that theology in America began to become more popular in the average home at that time, and was given further impetus with the free books of two California millionaire oil men in THE FUNDAMENTALS in 1910. Lo and behold, Adrian Rogers about 2000 got a copy of Hefley's book on Conservative Resurgence, and not being too swift as a former football player that Dr. Lee told for you to have my brain would be like putting a grand piano in a closet, not too swift with a failure to recognize rather than going back to the first century and "the faith once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3), they chose 1909 and 1910 as the criterion for "conservative" rather than going back to the Bible as they should have. This marked the historical point in the history of the SBC where theology and the theology of 1909-10 took preeminence over the first century Bible. Surely all will admit that this theology violently changed the way Baptists and a large portion of the Church, becoming a Rebellion more than a Resurgence. The disguise and false justification was the buzz word "literal", young preachers growing up on the SRB not stopping to think that their theology wrapped around the 3 words and concepts of rapture, millennium, and dispensationalism were LITERALLY not found once in the Bible, and colleges and seminaries started teaching theology courses rather than Bible courses. (You know that to be true because you lived through it.)

We have a plan and a program in the Southern Baptist Convention for almost everything, let me ask you why it is that we do not have a plan and program for peace and unity in the Southern Baptist Convention?

We have a plan for Bible study in the Sunday School; we have a plan for worship and giving in the Sunday morning and Sunday evening service; we have a plan for prayer in the Wednesday night prayer meeting and Bible study; we have plans for men's work and women's work; and for missionary activity and evangelism in revival

meetings. Now, I ask you again, does it not seem strange that at associational meetings, and convention-wide meetings, and even church business meetings, why is it that we do not have a plan for peace and unity in the Southern Baptist Convention?

Perhaps the more ignorant of what is happening in Baptist life, would respond that it is not needed! That would be gullible and would overlook the Baptist news in the New Mexican Baptist and what is secular news in terms of what has been happening to Texas Baptist and to the splits in the Southern Baptist Convention. I recall about 20 years ago when people said that the Southern Baptist Convention would never split; and then approximately 15 years ago when after two more Conventions had split off, people said, "Just be patient it will all work out."

Well, it has not worked out. It is getting worse, not better. Every week we hear of additional split and divisions and controversies among Texas Baptists and in the Southern Baptist Convention.

Brother, this should not be true among Christians. We need a plan and a program to promote peace and unity in the Southern Baptist Convention; and what better place to start, a place with which all of us should be able to agree, than with the Bible--specifically the place in the Bible where the very subject of Peace and Unity is discussed, in Ephesians 4:3.

11-1: The Text From Ephesians and Colossians.

"...Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:3 KJV)

I want this to be our text this morning, the focus upon which I ask you to cast your mental tents for a few minutes, except I want you to think of it in terms of the New English Version.

"Spare no efforts to make fast with bonds of peace the unity which the Spirit gives." (Ephesians 4:3 NEV)

Now notice that there are two aspects to the textual verse, the matter of securing with "bonds of peace", an effort to be exerted on our part; and the matter of the "unity which the Spirit gives" which should be the work of the Holy Spirit among us. And I submit to you if there is not peace and unity right now in the Southern Baptist Convention, and if there has not been peace and unity in the Southern Baptist Convention for at least the last 20 years--and surely I would beg that you see this is so--then there has been a failure on our part as Southern Baptists at either one or both of the aspects of this verse.

Where have we failed?

(1). Have we not made positive efforts to make fast or secure with bonds of peace;
or

(2). Do we not have the unity of the Spirit which Paul identifies in terms of the seven One's that we will look at together briefly; or

(3). Have we failed and or we continuing to fail on both counts--is it possible that not only do we lack the unity of the Spirit given by the Seven One's, and also that we are not making conscious and concerted efforts at peace in the Convention and in our churches?

(4). And I would offer one other possibility: that if we are extremely deficient on the unity of the Spirit given by the Seven Ones that are listed in the following verses of Ephesians--4:4-6--then it would be impossible to promote with bonds of peace a unity among our church members that does not exist in the first place.

1. We stress keeping positive and keeping the text in the context of the whole book of Ephesians, and Colossians.

We must keep positive about this; therefore our subject is: PAUL'S PLAN FOR PEACE AND UNITY IN THE SBC. And we must keep our study of Ephesians 4:3 in the context that it was written, that is of the whole book of Ephesians. Also we will expand to study to include the book of Colossians since they both were written almost simultaneously and essentially have the same subject matter. Paul mentions both in the conclusion of the letter to the Colossians.

**“And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans: and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.”
(Colossians 4:16)**

(1). So what we will do first is to start a sort of Harmony between Ephesians and Colossians.

You know how A.T. Robertson has written “A Harmony of the Gospels”. It compares the parallel subject matter of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. So we will try to do that for Ephesians and Colossians by first looking through the book of Colossians for a single verse that compares to Ephesians 4:3. Ideally, if possible, we would want this verse to speak of both “peace” and “unity”.

After reading again through Colossians, we find that the closest that we can come to a parallel or harmony is to be found in Colossians 3:14,15. Yes, it takes two verses to come close to the expression of Ephesians 4:3; and then again the wording goes beyond that of Ephesians 4:3. But that is the real benefit of comparing Scripture with Scripture. What we are going to read in Colossians 3:14,15 should help with our understanding of Ephesians 4:3.

“And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.” (Colossians 3:14,15)

(2). A look at Colossians 3:14,15 and the context.

While we do have the word “peace” in Colossians 3:14,15, we do not have the word “unity”; however you will notice something very interesting as a possibility, that is, “the bond of perfectness”. I could easily see a harmony between the “bond of perfectness” and the unity of the Spirit.

(3). If we expand the context beyond the one verse of Ephesians 4:3 and beyond the two verses of Colossians 3:14,15, I think we will really start to appreciate a Harmony of Ephesians and Colossians and on the subject of PAUL’S PLAN FOR PEACE AND UNITY IN THE SBC.

a. Ephesians 4:1-3.

“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness, and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4:1-3)

b. Colossians 3:12-15.

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.” (Colossians 3:12-15)

Notice the similarity of subject matter: in Ephesians it is “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called” and in Colossians it is that you are “the elect of God”; in Ephesians it is “lowliness and meekness” while in Colossians it is “humbleness of mind and meekness”; in Ephesians and Colossians both, it is “longsuffering”; in Ephesians it is “forbearing one another in love” while in Colossians it is “forbearing one another” and later it is “charity” which is the equivalent of “love”. Charity is love with wheels on it, or love put into action!

11-2: The Unity Which the Spirit Gives as Summarized in the Seven One’s.

Remember we had agreed to take the text of Ephesians 4:3, as amplified and explained by Colossians; and from that Ephesians 4:3 text to look at it in the two parts-- The Peace Which we are to Promote; and the Unity which the Spirit gives which are summarized in the Seven ONE’S. Let us take the second part first because this is the

basis for the peace we can promote. If we do not have that unity of the Spirit as given in the Seven ONE's, then we have not basis for peace among church members.

Paul does not leave us dangling about what that "unity of the Spirit" is. Having mentioned it in Ephesians 4:3, he then amplifies on specifically what it is in the next three verses; and in such we have the great Seven doctrinal statements of the Bible on what is most basic and fundamental in all of the Bible. If you could have only one short statement of Baptist beliefs and doctrines, only one short church charter, then these three verses should be it.

And may I say parenthetically that if we as Southern Baptists disagree on many things, and it is obvious that we do, we must agree on these fundamentals of the Seven ONE's. Without agreement here there is no salvation, and without agreement here there is no basis for unity and peace!

"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Ephesians 4:4-6)

1. Before we proceed to briefly look at these Seven ONE's and what they entail doctrinally, let us see once again if we have a parallel or harmony in the book of Colossians.

Where you might naturally expect for it to be is immediately after Colossians 3:14,15 even as the Seven ONE's of Ephesians are immediately after Ephesians 4:3. What we do have in Colossians 3:16, immediately after our parallel text of Colossians 3:14,15, is very illuminating.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." (Colossians 3:16)

How grateful I am for this parallel; and how obvious it is as to why Paul wanted the church at Ephesus to read Colossians and the church at Colosse to read the letter to Ephesus. It was impossible for Paul to say all that needed saying on peace, unity, and the basic doctrines of the Bible in one letter, so he said it in two. In reality, Paul wrote it in 14 letters; and encouraged us to read with them all the rest of the Bible of 66 books.

I don't know about you but when I consider the real foundation of the unity that we have as Christians and that we have as members of the SBC, I tend to think of that unity as coming primarily from the Bible; so that I was almost disappointed when I noticed that among the Seven ONES was not the ONE BOOK which is the Word of God. Well, Paul not only takes care of that seeming deficiency in the parallel of Colossians 3:16, but as we will show by closely looking at the Seven ONES each one is related to the One Book which is the Bible. How will we show that? By first introducing each of the Seven ONE's as to its essential meaning, and then showing

exactly what the context of the book of Ephesians means by those ONE's as well as the book of Colossians.

1. One "Word".

The favorite word of the Bible in talking about itself as the One Book is THE WORD. Therefore a very fundamental Bible statement and a fundamental Baptist belief would be: The Bible is the Word of God.

By that we mean that the Bible is divine in origin--it originated in the mind and heart of God; that it is absolute in authority--when God speaks why listen to men on the same subject; and it is sufficient in message--the Bible tells us all we need to know for salvation and the living of the Christian life.

Thus Paul writes in Colossians 3:16: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another..." We are to teach and admonish, or encourage one another, according to the Word of God and of Christ. The basis for our songs and melodies is the One Book which is the Word of God.

(1). Matthew 24:35.

Jesus knew that His words and teachings would become part of a New Testament and that New Testament in turn become a part of the One Book which is the Bible when He said that His words would never pass away.

**"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."
(Matthew 24:35)**

It has been almost two thousand years since Jesus spoke these words on earth, and this earth is still moving on. It still orbits about the sun with the periods of day and night and the seasons of fall, winter, spring, and summer. But you will see this earth pass away before you will see the words of Jesus and the words of this book the Bible pass away.

(2). Mark 4:14.

One reason that the Bible cannot be stopped and that it will never pass away is because it becomes a living entity in the heart and life of Christians.

"The sower soweth the word" (Mark 4:14)

As we teach and preach and talk to people about Jesus, hopefully we do so by quoting or paraphrasing or reading to them the Bible, and in doing so we are sowing the seed of the Word. I want you to keep this in mind as we look at the SEVEN ONES of Ephesians 4:4-6: that at the foundation of each of those Seven is the word that is in the heart and life of Christians.

(3). II Corinthians 3:3.

The Christian is a living epistle, an outgrowth of the Word of God and Christ that is planted in their heart through faith.

“Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; in in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.” (II Corinthians 3:3)

You church member and you southern Baptist are an epistle of Christ. The word of Christ and of God has been written in your heart by the living God through the living Spirit. There is a significant source of unity of the Spirit and one that underlies all the seven ones of Ephesians 4:4-6.

(4). It is alive in your heart, the Bible as the Word of God is alive period, Hebrews 4:12.

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart...” (Hebrews 4:12)

2. One Body.

Having considered the foundation in the ONE WORD that is in all the other seven, now we will look at the Seven ONES of Ephesians in the order that they are giving; and in the case of each will (1) summarize the doctrinal meaning; (2) see how the total book of Ephesians amplifies on this ONE; and (3) parallel or harmonize the ONE of Ephesians with Colossians; (4) and quickly show how that ONE is a development from the previous 10 letters which Paul wrote; (5) and then briefly consider that ONE in the total context of the Bible.

Conclusion:

Well before my license to preach and examination by Dr. Lee, J. Ralph McIntyre, and some deacons at Bellevue, since my wife had given me a copy of “A Chosen Vessel”, the biography of Dr. Lee, I requested of Dr. Lee to autograph it and after 3 times reminding me that he did not write that book (how well I knew because even then I was collecting the books of his sermons including one I will take a closing illustration from, “Bread from Bellevue Oven” with a message on “The Menace of Mediocrity”, which by the way made Dr. Lee a prophet not only with Adrian to follow him as pastor but also the later turn down of the Southern Baptist Convention well after his Presidency). Here is what Dr. Lee wrote:

“Dear Jerry, the Bible is the greatest book in the world – the miracle power of diversity in unity. The world has yet to see the way God will make of the man who really learns the Bible.

Stow it in your heart,

Honor it in your life.

God bless you in all ways--and always.

The Biographee

7/5/56 Robert G. Lee

Psalms 34

What in the world can be said after that. Of course I would like to make one correction, although the world now little knows and his books have been replaced in Lifeway largely with Beth Moore and the Scofield Reference Bible, Dr. Lee himself fulfilled that prediction that hardly any of us though we may strive can live up to. Sometimes the listener of "PayDay SomeDay" is so blinded by the story telling and rhetoric of one so educated in literature, that the appreciation falls short of how much Bible Dr. Lee knew and included in his sermons all done by memory. To listen each Sunday morning, each Sunday evening or Wednesday Bible Study was both a historical treat, memory, and Bible to remember and live by. At the introduction was mentioned Dr. Lee's book "Bread from Bellevue's Oven with the message including of "The Menace of Mediocrity" (which by the way has overcome the subsequent Presidents of the SBC since Dr. Lee because of Judge Pressler's, Paige Patterson's, and Adrian Rogers' 10 year plan to takeover the Convention made in secret meetings and the falsely called Conservative Resurgence), where Dr. Lee as normal waxed eloquently: "Times are so bad that wrens make prey where eagles dare not perch."

And Psalm 34, consider it a message for all of us in the SBC from the late and great Dr. Robert Greene Lee, my pastor:

1 I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise *shall* continually be in my mouth.

2 My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear *thereof*, and be glad.

3 O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.

4 I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.

5 They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.

6 This poor man cried, and the LORD heard *him*, and saved him out of all his troubles.

7 The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.

8 O taste and see that the LORD *is* good: blessed *is* the man *that* trusteth in him.

9 O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for *there is* no want to them that fear him.

10 The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good *thing*.

11 Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

12 What man *is he that* desireth life, *and* loveth *many* days, that he may see good?

13 Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.

14 Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

15 The eyes of the LORD *are* upon the righteous, and his ears *are open* unto their cry.

16 The face of the LORD *is* against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.

17 *The righteous* cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.

18 The LORD *is* nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

19 Many *are* the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.

20 He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.

21 Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.

22 The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.

NOTE: Do not know who is teaching SUCCESS and the Gospel of Wealth and prosperity and status now to young preachers, but without a doubt Psalm 34 is an excellent substitute!