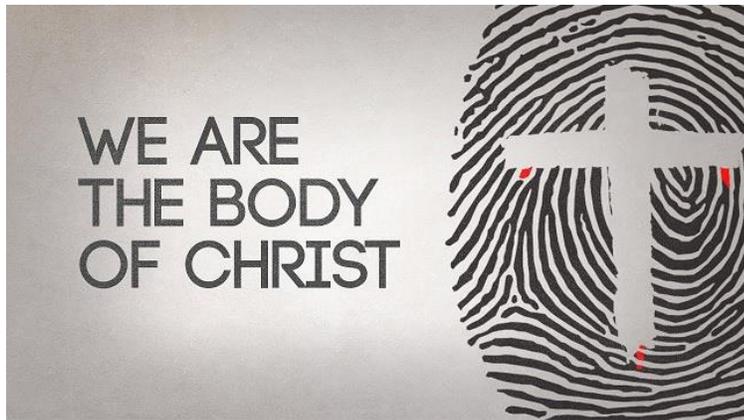


## Chapter 22: Paul's Plan for Peace and Unity in the SBC based on Ephesians and Colossians.



NOTE: If you can do it in the democratic and independent number of southern Baptists in local church that are also members of the CHURCH, the total body of Christ, then you can do it anywhere; and in the final analysis at the Second Coming of Christ when we all TOGETHER are caught up in the air, peace and unity will then be personified

anyway on the new earth in new Jerusalem.

Another chapter on One Commentary on Ephesians, sorry; although much of this chapter is repeated in the 7 volumes of the Learn Christ Bible Commentaries, it is necessary to conclude with something much more positive and that is on the continuing future of the total body of Christ, the Church of at least 22 times the word ecclesia is found in the Bible. At first, it may seem novel to advise something as simple as the method of peace and unity in Ephesians and Colossians as the solution for the SBC and the total body of Christ. All that we daily see and hear that is wrong, especially on unsound doctrine and practice in churches and denominations, tends toward discouragement; therefore, might it be suggested to you the words of God to Elijah in his time of despair. King Ahab and Queen Jezebel had with the Prophets of Baal made a shamble out of the official public worship of the God of Israel, Elijah had a victory over the prophets of Baal at Mount Caramel but now he was on the run and down in the dumps. The word came from God, "I have reserved to myself 7,000 that have not bowed the knees to Baal." Quite amazing that the Prophet Elijah, leading official representative of God at the time, sort of like J.D. Greear now in the SBC, did not know these 7,000 elects of God and did not even know about them. Likewise, we can be confident that the total body of Christ hidden out there in numerous little and big churches among the aggressive and outspoken, even purveyors of unsound doctrines, a 7 K of overcomers in CHRIST that have not been overcome by the falling away.

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.

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!

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 Colossae 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

3: 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 discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart...” (Hebrews 4:12)**

On the seven actual ONE's of Ephesians, we need a more thorough and systematic manner of development, so that a chapter is borrowed from volume 2, “Remember My Bonds”, the Life and 14 New Testament letters of Paul. When Paul, and the Holy Spirit through Paul, writes in Ephesians 4:3, “Spare no effort to make fast with bonds of peace the unity which the Spirit gives”, the unity of course is the inherent unity from a common spirit in each church members heart, a common spirit from the Holy Spirit, also called the spirit of Christ in the Bible; but the bonds of peace that church members are to work with....ah, the bonds of peace, that is another matter. You as a church member, or hopefully a believer in Christ, can do little about this inherent unity. You ever have the Spirit, or you don't; you either have this unity of the Spirit or not; your fellow church members either have it or not, and quite naturally some do, and some don't since the wheat will not be divided from the chaff until the end of time, the goats divided from the sheep.

4: Relationship of the Bonds of Peace to the Falling Away.

But ah...the bonds of peace...that is another matter. This is one of the prime subjects of this commentary, if not the prime subject. Remember the title, “Remember My Bonds”, the Life and 14 letters of the Apostle Paul. Paul chose his own epitaph by which to be remembered; and this epitaph which he uses in Colossians 4:18 {the parallel epistle with Ephesians, essentially duplicating the subject matter}, “Remember my bonds” (KJV). You have something similar in Ephesians 4:1, “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord...” This chosen epitaph from Paul has double or triple meaning: (1) Remember the bonds of the Apostle Paul as a prisoner of the Roman government, for Christ and for his ministry to the first century churches; (2) Remember the 14 epistles which Paul himself has written and the three he sponsored through John Mark and Dr. Luke; and (3) Remember the bonds of peace which are the core of those epistles, the seven bonds of peace which are listed in Ephesians 4:4-6, immediately after Paul writes in Ephesians 4:3

to “spare no effort to make fast with bonds of peace the unity which the Spirit gives.” What has really happened in southern Baptist churches in the last 40 years, and I am sure all other churches are the same, is that LITTLE EFFORT has been put into making fast with bonds of peace the Seven ONE’s. Southern Baptist churches have not been idle: if not into the bonds of peace, where has this vast multi-local church united effort of the largest Protestant denomination gone. The answer is simple, but overwhelming: THE EFFORTS HAVE GONE INTO BUILDING THE ORGANIZATION OF THE LOCAL CHURCH AND THE LARGEST DENOMINATION RATHER THAN IN THE BUILDING OF THE LIVING BODY. The seven - to - ten ONE’s that have been daily promoted from the pulpits, in Sunday School, in training union, in WMU and brotherhood, in denomination emphasis, from the Boards and Pastor’s Conferences and numerous associations and meetings has been like this: attend worship, go to Sunday School, tithe, read your Bible, invite somebody to come, etc. {Seriously, I can document these as considered by typical SBC church members to be “major doctrines of the Bible” as indicated by tests of the congregation on Sunday night.} While all of these are worthy and do indeed support the man-made organization of the church, they do not support and promote the bonds of peace according to the Bible, and they in no way, by anyone’s definition, can be considered major doctrines of the Bible. Many church members are now sick over what is happening in their local churches as the fighting that started 20 years ago at the denominational level between real southern Baptists and the fundamentalists like Criswell, and Adrian Rogers and Charles Stanley {men who came into the Convention from other denominations, primarily the Bible Baptists fundamentalists}, has now come down to fighting at the State and the local church level. You can hardly find a single southern Baptist church now where there is not significant divisions or splits, and if you do find one, it is generally because they are good a cover up. Of course, as noted in earlier chapters, we are in the Falling Away, but the gradual falling away started over 40 years ago when promoting the organization became a complete substitute for promoting the bonds of peace.

##### 5: The Priesthood of Believers.

The can take the doctrine of “the priesthood of believers” as an example of what has happened to sound teaching, or I should say the lack of sound teaching and preaching, in the SBC during the last 40 years ago. In 1960 when I did a research paper at Ouachita Baptist College on “Baptist Distinctives”, researching many Baptist statements of faith and practice and many books written up to that point on Baptist Distinctives, “the priesthood of believers” was very prominent in any statement of faith. Today as I research the books being used in this desperate effort to save SB churches for the denominations, and especially the giving to support the Boards, and which have been used the last 40 years, YOU CAN NOT FIND THE DOCTRINE OF THE PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS. Yes, I recently looked in BAPTIST DISTINCTIVES by W. R. White, in

THESE THINGS WE BELIEVE by J. Clyde Turner, in THE BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE by Herschel H. Hobbs, and in A GUIDE TO BAPTIST BELIEF AND PRACTICE by Stanley J. Grenz. It just is not there anymore; and along with the disappearance from Baptist thought and practice of these significant and major Bible doctrine, definitely one of the historical Baptist distinctives, have gone also by the wayside such related doctrines as serious study of the Bible, the authority of Christ through the pastor to the local church, and the Bible as the real word of God far beyond the “pick-and-choose” {sort of like hunt and peek} method of the fundamentalists {granted they make a lot of noise on inspiration of the Scripture while failing to practice respect for every “word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. {Their real respect is for the Scofield Reference Bible notes, the teachings of the fundamentalists seminaries, and what they think gives them unique status among believers, sort of like the Gnostics did.} They carry their Bibles; the full truth lies there; and it dies there; and with this dying is now the death warrant of the SBC which like an early New Testament church had a reputation but was dead.

May I close with a personal note about the total body of Christ, the church; granted it is somewhat invisible as Dr. Lee so vehemently insisted against, since it has no real formal organization or building except that in heaven. There is the only roll and that is, praise God, written in stone with every name of the 7 K of each generation since Christ, where no man on earth or any august organization of man can tamper with or use for their own purpose. Need it be said that when God our Heavenly Father Himself writes each name of those truly in Christ, it is eternal.

Oh, the personal note as Dr. Lee, some deacons at Bellevue Baptist Church, and Ralph McIntire were examining me for a license to preach, the 128 times the word ecclesia is mentioned in the New Testament came up, and I passed as I agreed with Dr. Lee personally to further study all those words in the Bible.

What is really amazing in this time of the falling away is if you can get through the trash and big egos, and keep away from it, there are so many believers in CHRIST on social media that gives dynamic witness to Christ. They are on Facebook, WordPress, Google plus, Twitter, and you name it. They, no doubt have to be among the 7K of these generations of the falling away. It is a visible body in a very real sense of the word, a church online and in social media, with social media being only one of their avenues to express their Continuing faith in Christ as the Apostle John talks about.

**“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may CONTINUE TO BELIEVE in the name of the Son of God.” (I John 5:13)**