*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

October 11 - 16

“Our Unity through the Spirit”

**Monday, October 11 Ephesians 4:3-6**

*“We are one”*

We, who by faith accept Christ as our Lord and Savior, are united in the Spirit and called to live a life worthy of being in Christ. The signs that we are living such a life are humility, gentleness, patience, love, and peace. When these are practiced in our relationships with one another in the congregation, we show ourselves to be dominated not by our personal wants and preferences but by the will of Jesus Christ who alone is head of our church.

*One, one, one* – the word is used seven times in these verses. All seven express the reality that there is only one gospel and that to believe that gospel is to enter into the unity it creates. Christianity is a shared faith. No separate or merely individual faith exists, nor are there different salvations. There are not several bodies of Christ in different locales, but one Body of Christ, and each local congregation is representative of that Body. It is the Holy Spirit that joins Christians together into one Body and unites us together with one God who exists as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

*I praise you, Holy Spirit, for bringing us together as one Body of believers. Amen.*

**Tuesday, October 12 Philippians 2:19-30**

*“He genuinely cares about your welfare”*

Timothy and Epaphroditus represent a small part of the complex network of fellow missionaries and messengers that surrounded Paul and his churches. Coworkers appear to have always accompanied Paul in his missionary ventures as a means of extending the apostle’s efforts. While here it is Epaphroditus who is being sent to Philippi with the letter, in another instance we see Timothy dispatched to Thessalonica to “strengthen and encourage” the church there and to “find out about [their] faith” (1 Thessalonians 2:2-5).

Paul is describing the way in which Christians join together as a fellowship of servants. As followers of Jesus Christ who are united in our common faith, we have the mind of Christ which is that of a servant. Christian faith leads us out of ourselves, freeing us from our self-centered interests, uniting us to Christ and to our brothers and sisters in common cause for God. Paul here shows us the direct connection between his understanding of our unity as Christians and its impact on day-to-day ministry.

*May our unity in you, Lord, be experienced in our ministry with one another. Amen.*

**Wednesday, October 13 Ephesians 1:3-6**

*“God’s unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his family”*

These verses call attention to God’s activity of choosing people in Christ. Election means that God chooses people, and this teaching cannot be turned around to the thought that people chose God. Election means that the existence of the people of God can be explained only on the basis of God’s character, plan, and action, not on some quality in the people who are chosen. The initiative is always God’s based on his grace. His purpose has *always* been to draw humanity to himself.

The emphasis on adoption in verse 5 shows that the purpose of election is relational. God, for no other reason than that he is a loving God, chose to adopt people *into his family* through Jesus Christ. Thus, it is election that brings each one of us into the body of Christ. Election brings benefits, but not so that we can bask in our unity and disdain those on the “outside.” Election also brings accountability; God has chosen us to do something – namely, to live holy and blameless lives before him. God’s choosing enlists people in his work and gives them responsibility.

*As a member of your family, Lord, I am accountable to you. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

October 11 - 16

“Our Unity through the Spirit”

**Thursday, October 14 Ephesians 2:19-22**

*“You are members of God’s family”*

The content and imagery of this closing section of chapter 2 revolves around the unity of the church under the lordship of Christ. A sojourner was a resident alien, and it was possible for a Gentile to become a naturalized member of the Jewish state by adopting the Jewish religion. Yet, in practice, he was never received as a full son of Abraham; his birth was always remembered and held against him. The Gentiles could only greet this word of Paul with praise: in Christ they were now “fellow citizens” with their Jewish brothers and sisters.

Paul then changes the metaphor from citizenship to family. The church is the household of God – a family. Hitherto the Gentiles have had none of the privileges that true sons and daughters have, such as the full love of the parents and the ability to inherit; now they have been brought into the intimacy of God’s family circle and partake of all its benefits. Paul utilizes a third metaphor, that of a building’s cornerstone, to show that Christ is the one who gives strength and stability to the fellowship of believers.

*We fully belong to you, Lord, and to one another. Amen.*

**Friday, October 15 1 Peter 3:8-12**

*“All of you be of one mind”*

God has called his sons and daughters to live in harmony with him and with one another. It is his desire for us to be growing continually into a unity of the faith and a unity of the knowledge of Jesus Christ so that we may grow into maturity and become more and more like Christ himself. All of us have enjoyed the harmony of an orchestra when all the instruments are in tune and all the musicians are following the lead of the conductor. And we have been thrilled to watch an athletic team which is playing together with perfect unity.

This should be the experience of our lives and of our churches. The oneness and the harmony which our Lord desires for the church must begin with us. The church is people – the people of God. When we are living under the lordship of Jesus Christ and are in tune with him, we are in harmony with our brothers and sisters in Christ. When there is disharmony and disunity in the church, sin is present. The solution is spiritual not organizational. We must seek the will of the Lord together – and do it. Then there will be harmony.

*Help us to have your mind, Lord, and we will be united in you. Amen.*

**Saturday, October 16 2 Peter 1:3-7**

*“Make every effort”*

Christians need to live godly lives if they are to succeed in properly loving one another. Peter’s point is clear: spiritual growth that produces Christian love is not a matter that believers can treat lightly; it is the goal to which we need to give ourselves body and soul, every day of our lives. Rather than summarizing this goal in a single action, Peter chooses to describe it as a series of ascending steps, describing, like the steps in a staircase, Christian virtues that must be added, one to the other, as we move upward in our pursuit of spiritual maturity.

Paul begins with faith, the foundational Christian virtue by which we respond to God’s call and come to know him and his Son, the Lord Jesus. Then, we add goodness to our faith which is the virtue of moral excellence. Then comes knowledge, which here means the ability to discern God’s will and orient one’s life in accordance with that will. Self-control is the virtue of not giving in to temptation, which in turn helps us to endure (remain steadfast) in times of trial. Godliness is the virtue of pleasing God in every phase of life, and nothing pleases God more than love.

*I will apply myself to developing these virtues, Lord, for your sake. Amen.*