

# 24-0630a Transcript

## 24-0630a - *The Mystery of Unity*, Scott Reynolds

**Bible Readers:** Kevin Woosley and Roger Raines

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## The Mystery of Unity

Transcript (0:04 - 30:19)

### Scripture Readings

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Reader: Kevin Woosley

(0:03) First scripture reading as Ephesians 2 verses 19 through 22. (0:11) Now therefore you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with saints (0:17) and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and (0:23) prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building being (0:29) fitted together grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together (0:36) for a dwelling place of God in the spirit. (0:39)

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Reader: Roger Raines

(0:44) Good morning. (0:49) The second scripture reading is from the first book of Corinthians chapter 6 verse 17. (1:00) But the one who joins himself to the Lord is the one spirit with him. (1:08) This concludes this reading. (1:10)

### Transcript

**Preacher:** Scott Reynolds

(1:14) Good to see everybody. (1:17) We've been working on equipping the saints for works of service, and I'd like to read (1:27) two key passages to get us into the context of our lesson. (1:34) The first one, it's going to be a while before we get to the second one. (1:39)

(1:40) But the first one is Ephesians 4 verses 11 through 16. (1:48) And Jesus himself gave some to the apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some shepherds (1:55) and teachers to equip the saints for the work of service, for building up the body of Christ, (2:03) until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to become (2:12) mature to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ that we should no longer be children tossed (2:19) to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men and their cunning (2:28) craftiness and deceitful schemes. But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way (2:37) into him who is the head and to Christ.

When each part is working properly, makes the body grow (2:48) so that it builds itself up in love. (2:55) It's interesting how sermons develop. I have to tell you, I'm having difficulty lately coming up (3:03) with a lesson.

Not that I can't find topics or don't know, generally speaking, where I want to go (3:10) with my studies, but I'm having difficulty with how I want to present the material or in deciding (3:18) which material to present when or how to express the ideas I'm trying to convey. (3:25) We usually have four full weeks with three intervening Sundays to prepare our sermons, (3:32) and I'm stymied usually up until the Friday before my sermon is due. I'll have pages of notes but no (3:42) sermon until you've heard of just-in-time inventory that they use to build cars.

You know, they get (3:50) the parts in just in time. They don't have to store them there on site. Well, I have just-in-time (3:57) sermons for Sunday morning, and then when something of a sermon does begin to show itself, (4:05) many times there are ideas that pop up that weren't there and wouldn't be in the sermon if (4:11) it had developed faster or sooner, which is a dilemma for me because then I want to procrastinate.

(4:21) For example, originally in my sermon, after reading Ephesians 4, 11 through 6, which we just did, (4:29) I wanted to emphasize the point that this equipping of the saints will continue until we (4:38) all attain, actually, to two things, the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God (4:46) to become mature. And then I was going to move on. However, on Friday, I was going over Del Tackett's (4:56) The Truth Project, which is where we're headed, by the way, for what to build on top of the (5:02) foundation of Christ that we've been given, and I was reminded in Del's eighth tour, that's what (5:09) he calls his lessons, tours, about the mystery of unity, or as he says in Latin, (5:19) unio mystica.

It got me thinking about that phrase we just read in Ephesians, until we all attain (5:29) to the unity of faith, and Del does not make this connection between what he calls the mystery (5:37) of unity, unio mystica, and this unity of the faith. But it appears that what he calls the (5:47) mystery of unity fits the description of the unity of faith, and I can only think that because I've (5:54) been studying this particular passage on equipping the saints, that when I saw that, (6:02) I said, wow, that really goes with what we're talking about. (6:06) So I'd like to share some of that thinking with you today.

(6:13) The mystery of unity, beginning with the common view of this, the unity of the faith mentioned in (6:24) Ephesians 4.13. If you remember from my AM lesson on April 7th this year, (6:33) regarding the unity of the faith, I quoted Henry Howey from his Bible handbook, where he applied (6:40) Paul talking about the oneness found in Ephesians 4, verses 1 through 6, against (6:51) denominationalism in Christianity. Henry says, the church is nearly 2,000 years old, (7:01) and in this respect, it is still in its childhood state. It's not yet in its visible manifestation (7:11) as a whole known unity.

Paul's unceasing fight was against factional elements in local churches (7:21) and the Jew-Gentile dissension. Then came the bitter controversies of the 2nd through the 4th (7:28) centuries. Then, the Roman imperial church, with its outward semblance of unity under state (7:36) authority, but poisonous blight of its spiritual life.

Then, the papal hierarchy, with its unity (7:44) of authority that robbed men of their rights of conscience and drove the Bible out of circulation. (7:53) Then, 400 years ago, the Protestant break for freedom occurred. Naturally, when men began again (8:02) to think for themselves after the

long night of papal bondage, they would see things somewhat (8:08) differently, and it was inevitable that the Protestant movement would go down through the (8:15) years in different streams.

So we still have, Henry is saying, a divided Christendom. Whether (8:25) there will ever in this world be an outward organic unity of the visible church, we do not know. (8:32) The selfishness and pride of men are against it, but there always have been, and still is, (8:40) a unity in the invisible church of God's true saints, which somehow, sometime, somewhere, (8:48) will come to full fruition in answer to Christ's own prayer in John 17, and manifest itself (8:58) as a full-grown body of Christ.

And this makes sense. Truly, there is only one faith. (9:09) Paul says so in Ephesians 4-5.

In the Church of Christ Gospel Advocate Commentary on Ephesians, (9:20) David Lipscomb and J. W. Shepherd also make application to Ephesians 4-6 for local member (9:28) unity against division, and I think of here in the local division, I think of here of church splits, (9:38) and also against denominational division. And let me read the passage in Ephesians before (9:44) quoting their commentary. Ephesians 4, 1-6, Paul says, (9:52) I therefore, a prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling (9:59) to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, and with patience, (10:05) bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit.

This is (10:12) Ephesians 4, verse 3, where Paul references the unity of the Spirit. Ten verses later, (10:21) in verse 13, he'll talk about the unity of the faith. That's the only time I'm going to make (10:29) that connection here, but I thought it was interesting that he's talking about both.

(10:35) Verse 4, there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs (10:42) to your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and (10:51) through all and in all. And following that, verse 6, David Lipscomb and J. W. Shepherd say in their (10:59) commentary on this passage, the Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor of all things, (11:07) who overrules and through the universe and dwells and works in every obedient heart, (11:14) both to will and to work for His good pleasure, this perfect and complete unity in the creation, (11:21) preservation, and direction of the universe and of all the loyal and true subjects of God (11:27) is given as the strong and irresistible appeal for unity among the children of God (11:37) in His body, guided by His Spirit. It is not a plea for denominational union.

(11:45) There were no denominations in the days of Paul, they say. It's an earnest plea for unity and (11:54) oneness in the congregation of believers, and Christ is given locally in doing the work of (12:03) God on earth. It is a grievous sin against God for men to destroy the unity of the body of Christ (12:11) by personal ambition and strife and bickering.

And I agree. There needs to be a unity among (12:21) the members of the body of Christ. There should be no division among us, and certainly (12:27) no denominational division in the church.

And if you have looked at any of the commentaries (12:34) and read this passage, you too were probably thinking in these terms. But there is another (12:44) unity. It reminds me of Yoda in the Star Wars saga saying, there is another.

But there is another (12:53) unity, another union, to consider that the scriptures speak about that is equally applicable (13:01) to this unity of the faith. This other union, we will see, is represented by

the union (13:11) of a husband and wife. That relationship between a husband and wife is a type of another relationship (13:21) that is the anti-type.

And it is this anti-type that can be said to be the unity of the faith. (13:34) Ephesians 5, verses 22 through 32. Wives, submit your own husbands as to the Lord.

(13:46) For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, (13:54) and is himself its Savior. Now, as the church submits to Christ, so also (14:03) wives should submit in everything to their husbands, which doesn't go well in today's altar, (14:11) by the way. In this scripture, we can see that the husband is a type, a foreshadow of Christ.

(14:21) Christ being the anti-type of, or the reality foreshadowed by, the husband. And the wife is a (14:30) type that foreshadows the church. The church being the anti-type, the reality depicted (14:38) by the wife.

Continuing in verse 25, Paul says, Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the (14:47) church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing (14:55) of water with the Word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot (15:05) or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way, (15:13) husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

(15:22) For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ (15:31) does the church, because we are members of his body. The husband-wife relationship (15:43) prefigures and foreshadows the relationship that Christ has with his church. As proof (15:53) of this, Paul quotes Jesus in Matthew 19, who himself quotes the law of marriage found in (16:03) Genesis 2, verse 31.

Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, (16:16) and the two will become one flesh. Paul then calls the union of a husband and wife a mystery. (16:27) The two shall become one flesh, he says.

Verse 32, this mystery is profound, (16:37) and I'm saying that it refers to Christ and the church. Paul tells us that, in fact, he's not (16:49) really talking about the husband and wife relationship. The whole point of the type is (16:55) to show the importance of the anti-type.

That is here the relationship between Christ and his church. (17:07) So, if the union of the husband and wife is one flesh, what is the union of Christ (17:23) and his church? We find the answer to that question from Paul, reasoning with the Corinthians for why (17:33) Christians should not participate with temple prostitutes. Picking up in the second part of (17:42) verse 13 in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, Paul says, the body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality, (17:56) but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

Would you have expected that, by the way? Wouldn't you (18:04) have expected that Paul would have said here, the body is not meant for sexual immorality, (18:14) but for one's spouse, one's husband, one's wife. But he doesn't say that. The body is not meant (18:24) for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

By his power, (18:37) God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. (18:44) Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? (18:53) When we see the word member here, I think we have a tendency to view it like a membership, (19:03) like a membership in an

organization, you know, like Sam's Club. I'm a Sam's Club member, (19:11) but that's not how Paul's using the word here.

He's saying that the word member is a part of a body, (19:21) like a body part, as he says in 1 Corinthians 12, verses 12 through 27, like a foot, or an eye, (19:29) or an ear, those kinds of body member parts, and so on. And so in order to get the import of what (19:38) he's saying here, and I know it may sound a little crass, but it's important, I'm going (19:44) to substitute the word, for the word member, the phrase body part, because that's how he (19:52) originally used it. In verse 15 again, in chapter 6 of 1 Corinthians, do you not know that your (20:02) bodies are body parts of Christ himself? Shall I then take the body parts of Christ and unite them (20:13) with a prostitute? And some translations say, with the members of a prostitute, which would (20:19) be like saying, should I then take the body parts of Christ and unite them with the body parts (20:25) of a prostitute? Never.

Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with (20:39) her in body? For it is said, the two will become one flesh. There's that mystery again. The two (20:50) will become one flesh, even in an unauthorized union.

And by the way, this is also why all (21:03) unauthorized unions are sin. They are all wrong. Why? Because they do not properly foreshadow or (21:14) depict the relationship Christ has with his church.

The husband-wife union was designed by (21:26) God to depict the union of his son with his church, the bride of Christ. Verse 17, but whoever is (21:44) united with the Lord is one with him in spirit. By the way, I'm sorry, (22:01) and there it is.

This is the mysterious union, the union of God in man. The foreshadow was a union of (22:10) flesh. The two will become one flesh.

The reality depicted is the Son of God united with man, his (22:21) creation. We could say, and the two will become one spirit. But Paul says it this way.

We are one (22:31) with him in spirit. And Paul continues in verse 19. Do you not know that your bodies are temples (22:43) of the Holy Spirit who is in you? Why do you think we're a temple? That's where God lives.

(23:04) Whom you have received from God, and here's the tie into the context of our study in equipping (23:13) the saints. We are learning what we are supposed to build on the foundation of Christ that's been (23:21) given to us. Paul will say in Ephesians chapter two, we'll see shortly, that we are being built (23:33) into a holy temple.

The Holy Spirit lives in us. He is in us. This mysterious union, (23:44) if we belong to Christ.

So Paul reminds them, you are not your own. You were bought with a price. (23:56) Therefore, honor God with your bodies.

There is yet another way that we are united with Christ. (24:12) When we are baptized into his death and resurrection, we are united with him in his death (24:19) and resurrection. Romans six, verse five, in that context where he's talking about (24:27) those of us who have been baptized into the death of Christ.

Verse five of chapter six, (24:35) for if we have been united with him in a death like his, and how do we do that? By being baptized (24:42) into his death. Verses one, two, and three say, we shall certainly be united with him (24:53) in a resurrection like this. In fact, it's through baptism that we are united with the Holy Spirit (25:01) is the gift that we receive.

Acts 2.38, Peter replied, repent and be baptized, (25:09) every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, (25:15) and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And the gift of the Holy Spirit, there (25:22) is the Holy Spirit, as we have seen that he is in Christians. So when we submit ourselves to (25:33) and obey Christ, we are not only redeemed and saved, but we also gain an intimate relationship (25:46) with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

So intimate that they live (25:55) within their temple, not made with human hands, but within the temple they made (26:03) our bodies, they live within us. In Satan's tempting of Adam and Eve to disobey God, (26:13) do you remember what he said? He promised them that you will be like God. Doesn't that temptation (26:25) pale compared to what God actually does for those who obey and submit to his will? (26:36) The union of God and man.

Doesn't this better fit the idea? Until we all attain to the unity (26:45) of the faith in the context of equipping the saints, then we shouldn't be splitting churches (26:54) or making denominations and that kind of unity. We should all attain to obeying and submitting (27:03) to him who is the husband of the church. Which brings us to our second contextual scripture (27:13) passage, where Paul is referencing the building metaphor in Ephesians.

Ephesians chapter 2, (27:21) 17 through 22. And Jesus came and preached peace to you who were far off, and peace to those who (27:29) were near. For through him we both have access in one spirit to the Father.

So then, you are no (27:41) longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the (27:46) household of God built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself (27:55) being the cornerstone in whom the whole structure being joined together, being united, if you will, (28:08) grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him, you also are being built together (28:19) into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. A holy temple, a dwelling place for God (28:32) by the Spirit.

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians chapter 3 verse 11, (28:37) no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. (28:46) We need to discover that foundation and establish it, and once we've done that, (28:51) what do we do? It seems Paul expected someone else to build on it. He says in 1 Corinthians 3 (29:00) verse 10, I laid a foundation as a wise builder and someone else is building on it.

The question is, (29:11) what do we build? In light of the unity of the faith, our union with Jesus Christ, (29:18) how about a holy temple, a dwelling place for God by the Spirit? What could be more fitting (29:28) than for God's creation to submit and obey to our Lord and become a place where God could live with (29:36) us through the Spirit? We will investigate building holy temples the next Sunday morning (29:43) that I preach. Here's a closing thought. Do you think that the mansion God is preparing for us in (29:55) heaven has anything to do with what kind of temple we build for him in us on earth? Yeah, (30:08) what do you think? We're extending the invitation to anyone who's subject to it, (30:17) come while we stand and sing. (30:19)