

Stand Together: One Faith

October 18, 2020

Adoniram Judson arrived in a country south of India called Burma in 1813. He was to spend the better part of 33 years toiling in the jungles for Jesus. He labored 6 grueling years to gain his first convert to Jesus. It took him 12 years to 18 converts for Christ.

All the while, he buried two wives and six children in the Burmese soil.

Back in the United States, Judson's work was celebrated in print and pulpit alike. Over the course of years, he began to take on a kind of heroic status.

And on what would be his only return trip back to the US the nation flocked to hear the great Mr. Judson.

Vance Christie tells of one such gathering. After a sermon Judson got up to speak and everyone leaned forward and strained their ears to hear the man who was not used to speaking English anymore. He opened his mouth and

"For about fifteen minutes he spoke with simplicity and pathos of what the precious Savior had done for His people and what they owed to (Jesus). As Judson sat down it was apparent that most of the listeners were disappointed. After the service, several individuals asked Emily (his wife) why Judson had not shared, instead, a story from his colorful missionary experiences. When she mentioned the matter to him on the way home he responded,

"Why, what did they want? I presented the most interesting subject in the world, to the best of my ability."

"But they wanted something different—a story."

"Well, I am sure I gave them a story—the most thrilling one that can be conceived of."

"But they heard it before. They wanted something new of a man who had just come from the (mission field)."

"Then I am glad to have it to say, that a man coming from the (mission field) had nothing better to tell than the wondrous story of Jesus' dying love."

What I am going to tell you today, you have heard before. You know. I am going to speak today of our ONE Faith.

Over the past few weeks we are reminding ourselves of many things we already know. Sometimes the things we think we know best are the things we forget first. We as a Church are to MAKE EVERY EFFORT

To stay united.

Why?

ONE Body
With ONE Spirit
Sharing ONE Hope
Under ONE Lord
Sharing ONE Faith
ONE Baptism
Serving ONE God

We are not united because—

- We are in ONE nation.
- Have ONE view on social justice.
- Share ONE political party.
- Have ONE view on race relations.
- Share ONE race.
- Share ONE background.

No. We are—

ONE Body
With ONE Spirit
Sharing ONE Hope
Under ONE Lord
Sharing ONE Faith
ONE Baptism
Serving ONE God

These things are not new, novel, or trending. It may not be what everyone wants to hear—but I echo the words of Judson,

“Then I am glad to have it to say, that a man coming from the (mission field) had nothing better to tell than the wondrous story of Jesus’ dying love.”

PROP: Remember your ONE FAITH together.

“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” Ephesians 4:1-6

PRAY

1. Faith

Before we explore our common faith, we must define our terms. Faith is one of those words that can be used as either a verb or a noun. Both are legitimate uses of the word “faith” in English.

Another way to say what I mean is that ONE faith does not refer to our experience of faith but to the content of what we believe.

If you were to say, I believe. Then you are using the word faith as a verb. The problem with this understanding of the word is that the focus of the faith is upon the person exercising the faith. This not what Ephesians 4 is talking about.

Incidentally, way too many Christians are wracked with guilt about how much faith they have. Listen, what matters is NOT how much faith you have, but who you have faith in. Even if you have a slight, lanky, spindly amount of faith in Jesus, it is enough.

Christian, it is not the amount of faith you have—because lets be real, we all could/should have more faith than we should—but WHO our faith is in. Where you put your faith is FAR more important than the amount of faith you have. The message about Jesus is true and trustworthy NO MATTER how much you believe.

I had better stop there. That is another sermon for another day.

In Ephesians 4, about our ONE Faith as something all authentic Christians believe. When “faith” is used as a noun as here, it refers to that body of truth that has nothing to do with you and me. It just is, whether we believe in it or not.

In other words, our ONE Faith is not our subjective experience of faith but the content of what we believe.

To borrow the words from Adironim Judson,

We have “nothing better to tell than the wondrous story of Jesus’ dying love.”

What is our ONE Faith?

2. Our Faith

In short, our faith is the message about Jesus Christ, sometimes called the gospel. Or the good news. The ONLY essential message in history. What is the substance of our faith?

This is one of those things worth building your life upon. The things worth dying for—more importantly worth giving your life for. So, today we are going to spend time remembering what we all know—but MUST NOT FORGET.

More than just NOT forgetting—we MUST remember.

The core message of our ONE faith—

[6] For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. [7] For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—[8] but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:6–8

Christ died for the ungodly.

What?

Our ONE FAITH means we have a savior who did not wait for sinners to come to him, rather, he went to them and died FOR them. He died for the ungodly.

We might be able to related to giving our lives for someone we love. The annals of history are packed with men and women who have died in the place of someone they loved.

Men have taken bullets for buddies.

Soldiers have jumped on grenades for their platoon.

Mothers have been beaten in protection of their children.

Many have been killed so that their families might live.

Human love is typified by dying for others that love them back. It is noble, even good to die for a good person.

Christ did something that was more than just noble and good. He did something no one every expected.

He died for people who did not love him back—and would never (of their own choice) love him back. Jesus died for his enemies.

Most of us don't have enemies. Not really. We have people who might say things against us. We might have those people who say mean things on facebook about us or avoid us at a party/wedding/funeral.

They aren't enemies as much as: It is awkward to see them people.

It is awkward to see them people aren't enemies.

It is awkward to see them people you try and blend with the crowd and arrange the room so that you don't have to even exchange pleasantries.

Right? Right? You all do this.

Enemies are much more than It is awkward to see them people.

Imagine having a real enemy who has sworn a blood oath to not rest until you die at his hands. How are you going to respond to that sort of threat?

You would be ever watchful. Carefully planning your day. Carefully planning who is with you. Carefully planning where you go. Carefully watching and getting others to watch.

This goes way beyond awkward at a party.

If you saw him, you would run or yell or fight. You might go into hiding. You might hire a battalion of body guards. You might try to get the police to help.

You would not sleep well.

You would eat sitting down.

You would avoid crowds.

You would never walk into a room unawares.

Your eyes would forever be on the horizon.

Your thoughts would forever be ranging from rage to fear and back again.

All this looking and fear would conspire to make you weary. And nothing less than the destruction of your enemy would change that.

You would not expect any kindness from your enemy. You would especially not expect any sacrifice from your enemy. No one dies for an enemy.

Yet that is exactly what Jesus did for us. He died for his enemies so that they might become his friends.

There are no stories like that, but even if there were—the one we are considering now would put it in the shade.

Yet. Christ died for the weak, ungodly, sinners, enemies.

God creates all things and upholds all things and those created in his image rebel.

We were God's sworn enemies. And instead of destroying us—he showed us his love by destroying his son.

God showed his love by sending his son to die for sinners. Sinners who have violated God and violated the Godman at every turn. Enemies in thought and deed. People who would kill and did kill in

The very best of God's love hangs on the cross. It is nice that he provides for your daily needs today. It is wonderful that he has blessed you with a job. It is excellent that you have health.

But it is best that Jesus died for you—

“The gospel reveals the wonderful love of God the Father to poor sinful, miserable men, in giving Christ not only to love them while in the world, but to love them to the end. And all this love is spoken of as bestowed on us while we were wanderers, outcasts, worthless, guilty, and even enemies.” Jonathan Edwards

God's love for us will outlast this world. His love will endure past the time when the sky is rolled up like a scroll and the stars fall their place.

Christian, God proves his love for us by giving his son for us.

I want you to notice something—Look at verse 8,

but God (Christ) shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us

That is not what it says is it?

What does it say?

but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us

It is in a place like verse 8 that we start to begin to sort of see the edge of the Trinity. We may not be able to understand the God who is 1 & 3. But we can understand that God sent Jesus as an expression of his love for us.

It can be popular to think of God as irrationally angry and is irrationally loving. That God is all rusty nails and sharp corners and Jesus sweetness and charm.

Not true. God and Jesus are together in person and purpose. The love note burned in time at the cross is written by God's hand as the Son of God hung and died.

We the weak, the ungodly, the sinners huddled away from God were sought by God himself. So today, He comes to us not to punish but to console. To build up. To tell love forever.

Christian—hear this: God loves you and the death of Jesus proves it. His love for you is not because of you but because of him. His love for you is rooted in an historical event, not in our obedience.

Before we move on, I want you to sit and reflect for just a moment. If you are a believer—trusted in Jesus’ death to be a replacement for your death because you are a great sinner—if you are a Christian God loves you.

Did you notice the present tense? God shows us his love? Verse 8 says, “God shows his love to us...”

Now.
Today.
Always.

Our lives are full of change—

One day we are marrying our brides—the next we are saying good by as they go to Jesus.

One day we are bringing children home—the next they are leaving home.

One day we enjoy full life and complete health—the next life fades and disease comes in.

One day we are full of hope and the next our hope mildews into disappointment.

But through it all—

“God shows his love to us...”

Now.
Today.
Always.

As Judson said, It is a wondrous thing.

More than that—

We are forgiven—but not just forgiven.

We have been justified by faith and declared righteous before the very face of God. This means infinitely more than just forgiveness.

We are not only declared righteous; we have the very righteousness of God.

Proof that we have the righteousness of God is that we are joined with Jesus. This means we don’t need our personal records of spiritual validation.

The Christian life is not like the rest of our life. We take records of validation with us often:

When you apply for a job, your record of validation is a resume.

When you apply for a university, your record of validation is a transcript.

Bid on a job, your record of validation is your other customer's satisfaction.

God has declared us validated in Christ.

These things are easy to learn, simple to repeat but hard to understand.

That is NOT all—

We are further trying to understand that the power of sin has been broken forever by Jesus in his death and resurrection. We are trying to understand that we sin in grace and not under sin.

Our ONE faith means that we are loved by the ONE God because of the work of our ONE Lord.

THIS is what unites us. Do you see why this unity is worth striving, working and making every effort for? Oh yes. We are united around this great truth. Jesus died for the ungodly and Jesus to bring the unworthy to his father.

