

Ephesians 4:1-6 (NIV)

- ¹As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.
- ²Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.
- ³Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.
- ⁴There is one body and one Spirit-- just as you were called to one hope when you were called--
- ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism;
- ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

49-04-02-Our Trust in the Church

creed, church, unity, holiness

Eph 4:1-6

The Church of the Creed is the Church Christians need.

INTRODUCTION: (Text as Scripture Reading.)

–I’ll start **title**, with what Paul said– **v.1**, *As a prisoner for the Lord... I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.* In other words, “*I urge you to be God’s Church!*”, because that’s “*the calling [we] have received.*”

–Jesus told us *His* priority: “*I will build my church.*” *Putting faith* in Him *puts us* in His *Church*. **But**, early in Church history, *falsehoods* sprang up, and a standardized statement of faith was needed: *the Creed*.

–Using the words, “*I believe in the holy catholic church,*” the *Apostles’ Creed* aligned Christian faith with orthodox NT teaching. *We put our trust in the “holy catholic church” that Jesus is continuing to build.*

HOM.idea. In explaining why this is so, I’ll take those terms in reverse order—*church, catholic* and *holy*—using 3 questions... the first is...

I. What Makes the Church the “Church”?

A. Let’s look first at the meaning of the word “church”:

1. In English, **church** came from Mid.Eng. **kirke** [derived from the Gk. word, **kyriakos** = *of the Lord*], it first referred to “*the people of God,*” later to “*the house of God.*” (Both derivations are significant.)
 - a. **Gk., **kyriakos****: *belonging to the Lord* (It’s His church, not ours).
 - b. **Mid.Eng., **kirke****: *the Lord’s house* (*believers are His habitation*).
2. But in the NT, the word translated “church” is Gk. **ekklesia**:
 - a. It’s a composite of **ek** [*out from*] + **klesia** [*called by name, invited*] (It shows the nature of God’s people as those called out of an old life into a new life– **1 Pet 2:9**, But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people **belonging to God**, that you may declare the praises of him who **called you** out of darkness into his wonderful light.)
 - b. Its common use (*a public assembly*) has more implications:
 - (1) we become identified with those we *assemble with*, and
 - (2) *public assemblies* have *ceremonies* [**worship**; **creed** reciting].

B. The Church’s unity is unique, even as the Trinity’s 3 Members are unique– **v.4-6**, *There is one body and one Spirit– just as you were called to one hope when you were called–one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

1. It is “*one body*,” but does have 4 legitimate, authorized divisions:
 - a. Jesus defined its tiniest division—Mat 18:20, “For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.” [Cyprian, martyred in 258 AD, said, “*where 2 or 3 believers are met together, there is a Church.*”]
 - b. Home-meetings were designated as churches—Col 4:15, Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. [1st 3 centuries, no church buildings at all! Persecution & finances, both then and now, are reasons Christians met and still meet in homes.]
 - c. Cities divide the Church | Scripture’s only denomination (division by name): “*the church of God at Corinth,*” 7 city-churches in Revelation, etc.].
 - d. The Church is divided by death: church militant & triumphant.
2. Spiritually, all 4 of these divisions are no division at all! The Church is ever “*one body*” despite a history of unauthorized divisions (like those Paul wrote against in 1 Cor 1:12-13, What I mean is this: One of you says, “I follow Paul”; another, “I follow Apollos”; another, “I follow Cephas”; still another, “I follow Christ.” Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul?

TRANS: The Church of the Creed is the Church Christians need. Denominational divisions may be here to stay, but no denomination fully honors Christ, if it fails to practice a true *catholic* understanding of the Church. *And that leads into our next question...*

II. What Makes the Church “Catholic” [in definition, reality & practice]?

- A. Catholic definition (*comprehensive, universal, world-wide*) means that no denomination, has exclusive rights to the name “Catholic.”
 1. [When the Roman Church claimed to be the *Catholic Church*, its very name denied that Eastern Orthodox churches were part the One Body of Christ.]
 2. [The Reformers salvaged the term *catholic* by applying it to “*the whole congregation of Christian people dispersed throughout the whole world.*”]
- B. Catholic reality means that—despite all divisions, *God-defined* or *man-made*—there’s only one Body of Christ, one Bride of Christ, one “church of God, which he bought with his own blood.” (Acts 20:28)
 1. It includes the *repentant thief on the cross*, who died *unbaptized*.
 2. It excludes any who *are baptized*, but fail to truly *trust in Christ*.
- C. Catholic practice means maintaining unity—v.3, *Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.* (Paul is saying...)
 1. “*Make every effort*”—work hard to accept those you disagree with;
 2. “*keep the unity of the Spirit*”—celebrate the *diverse variety* in the “*one*

- body” of Christ (man’s uniformity is not “*the unity of the Spirit*”);
3. “*the bond of peace*”—denominational ties can either *disrupt* or *maintain* “*peace*,” depending on the *pride* or *humility* with which they are held. (Christian groups are enriched or impoverished to the degree they receive or reject their family in the “one body”).

TRANS: Maintaining a *catholic spirit* demands *holiness*. **The Church of the Creed is the Church both Christians and sinners need.** When *lost souls* come to Christ, they enter “the Holy Catholic Church.”

III. What Makes the Church, the Bride of Christ, “Holy”?

- A. The Bride is holy by marriage. (We get His name—Isa 57:15, For this is what the high and lofty One says—he who lives forever, whose **name is holy**: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.”)
- B. The Bride is holy by Christ’s cleansing—Eph 5:25, Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her **holy**, cleansing her by the **washing with water through the word**, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but **holy** and blameless.
- C. The Bride is holy by receiving Christ’s character—v.2, *Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.* (The Holy Spirit empowers the Bride to love the way Jesus loved, and *that* is our wedding dress—Rev 19:7-8, Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” (Fine linen stands for the **righteous acts of the saints.**))

CONCLUSION:

—The Bride, the “*holy catholic church*,” gets the *holy name* of Christ, the *radiant cleansing* of Christ, and the *righteous character* of Christ.
 —We can *trust* in what Jesus came to build. **The Church of the Creed is the Church Christians need.** Each time we say “*I believe in the holy catholic church,*” **let’s remember** * “*the calling* [we] *have received.*”...
 * to be the Church: called out from the world as a *light to the world!*
 * to be the Catholic Church: called to the *unity of the apostolic faith!*
 * to be the Holy Catholic Church: called to live out the *holy life of love* shown to us by our Holy Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ!