

SPIRITUAL UNITY: GOD'S PLAN—PLANK THREE, ONE HOPE

“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling....” (Ephesians 4:4).

Paul's unequivocal declaration to the Christians of ancient Ephesus notwithstanding, it is commonly thought that the gospel of Christ offers to every one the fulfillment of his/her personal hope, the realization of each individual's most precious dream—whatever that might be.

One person may be seeking a soul mate, the spouse of his/her most cherished dream. Another may dream of owning a prosperous small business that would free him from financial worry and allow his family to live in comfort. Yet another may dream of being a successful professional athlete. (What kid hasn't—including this writer?) And, so it goes, on and on, dream upon dream.

Any thing wrong with such aspirations, such hopes? Of course not. But is this the sort of thing the Holy Spirit had in mind when he directed Paul to write, “one hope of your calling”?

The answer, of course, lies in identifying the Christian's calling. Whatever the appeal God has used to call us to himself in Christ, whatever the reward God has promised to us for our positive response to that calling, will determine and identify its “...one hope.”

Simply put the Christian's calling is to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief in the truth to which one is called by the gospel for the obtaining of the glory of his Lord, Jesus Christ (II Thessalonians 2:13-14). It was for this purpose, the fulfillment of this hope, that Jesus gave his life in atonement for our sins and conquered death by his resurrection to provide hope for us of doing the same by putting our trust in him through faithful obedience to his gospel. (Cf., I Peter 1:3-5, 22-25).

And what part does this one hope play in God's plan for the unity of Christians? What does it accomplish in unifying the children of God?

Obvious, is it not? Focus on the hope of eternal life in the glory of heaven trivializes everything else of this world and concentrates our attention on the realization of this goal for ourselves, as well as helping others to gain this same priceless reward. Love for sectarianism would vanish and the exaltation of doctrine that contradicts the word of God would cease as every soul would focus on the word of God's Son, Jesus Christ, in quest of this unique hope.

—Jerry F. Bassett