

that the manner in which “the Promise” would come to fruition was that by the work of the Spirit, all those blessed of the nations would join the believing remnant of Israel to form one unified body of the Messiah.

The fact that “one body” is connected with “one Spirit” by the conjunction “and” should be understood to emphasize that the “one body” is the result of the work of the Ruach HaKodesh, the Holy Spirit, in applying the work of Yeshua to those who are called, not only from Israel but also from every nation. There obviously can only be one body of the Messiah, for He is the head (4:15; 5:23) and thus all who are “in Messiah” are in the one body of Messiah, the *eklessia* He is building.

The body of Messiah, the *eklessia* He promised to build, is therefore unified through the work of the Ruach HaKodesh, the “Spirit of holiness,” just as Paul has asserted in the previous verse (4:3). For the Spirit of God is constantly at work in the life of every believer to bring about a growing holiness, i.e., sanctification of one’s life as set apart unto God and from the unrighteous ways of the world. And such sanctifying work of the Spirit, while evidenced in many ways in the believer’s life, from a corporate perspective is seen in the desire and ability of the local *eklessia* to be unified for the purpose of giving glory and honor to Yeshua, the head of the *eklessia*, and to help one another grow to become more and more like Yeshua in thought, word, and actions. It is when the community of faith is unified for the purpose of serving each other in the life of faith in Yeshua, that we present to a watching world the glory of our Lord Who has redeemed us to be children in His family (cf. 1:5; 5:1–8).

...just as also you were called in one hope of your calling – In v. 1 of our chapter Paul exhorts us to live in a manner which is “worthy of the calling with which you have been called.” This means that as we recognize and affirm the unspeakable gift of God’s grace given to us in Yeshua, we will be all the more committed to live by the strength and guidance of the Spirit in order to honor the One Who has called us to Himself.

Now, in our verse, Paul exchanges the word “worthy” with the word “hope” to identify yet another aspect of “our calling” which offers strong encouragement and motivation to progress in a life lived out to the glory of God. Paul has already referenced the idea of “hope” three times in our epistle. In 1:12 he refers to believers as those who “hope in Messiah.” In 1:18, he states that his prayers for the recipients of his epistle include the request that they (and we) would know “the hope of His calling,” while in 2:12 he describes unbelievers as “having no hope and without God in the world.”

But what does Paul intend us to understand by his use of the word “hope” as used in connection with eternal salvation in Messiah Yeshua?¹ In Paul as well as in the Apostolic Scriptures as a whole, the primary meaning carried by the word group consisting of the verb “to hope” ἐλπίζω (*elpizō*) and its related noun “hope” ἐλπίς (*elpis*), is that of a “firm conviction” based upon known and received facts. Thus, while our “hope” may relate to events in the future, it is founded upon the fact that what God has promised He will surely bring to pass. Further, it is clear that Paul uses this concept of “hope” as resting upon the finished work of Yeshua in His death and resurrection, maintained and applied through His ascension and intercession. Note how Paul uses this concept of “hope” in his other epistles.

For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it. (Rom 8:24–25)

Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Yeshua Messiah, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago.... (Tit 1:1–2)

We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Yeshua Messiah, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Messiah Yeshua and the love which you have for all the saints; because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel (Col 1:3–5)

Indeed, the mystery revealed to Paul and the Apostles, which had been hidden to previous generations, made known God’s method by which “the Promise” would be fulfilled and defined the “hope” as the sure promise of eternal life for all, Jew and Gentile alike. For all who are saved by faith in the Messiah are likewise united in the *eklessia*, the body of Messiah, as Paul writes in his epistle to the Colossians.

1 In 1:12 Paul utilizes the verb προελπίζω (*proelpizō*) which combines the prefix “pro,” meaning “before” or “first” and the verb ἐλπίζω (*elpizō*), which means “to hope.” The other references in Ephesians where the word “hope” is found (1:18; 2:12; 4:4), utilize the noun ἐλπίς (*elpis*), “hope” which is cognate to the verb ἐλπίζω (*elpizō*).

that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Messiah in you, the hope of glory. (Col 1:26–27)

The hope which the believer has is not a “wish” but a confident laying hold of what God has promised.

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Yeshua Messiah, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God... and hope does not disappoint...(Rom 5:1–2, 5a)

Regarding Paul’s words in Rom 5, one author comments:

Only a confident expectation produces joy; wishing for something one is not sure to receive produces anxiety rather than joy. As Paul goes on to write, Christian hope is a hope that will never disappoint us.¹

And as Hoehner comments:

Hope for believers is not the world’s “hope so” but the absolute certainty that God will deliver what he has promised.²

That the Apostolic Scriptures have the sense of a “settled assurance” when “hope” is used in connection with one’s salvation is made clear in the inspired words of Heb 11:1 in which the author combines “assurance” with “hope.”

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. (Heb 11.1)

This, then, is the emphasis Paul intends in our text when he writes of “the one hope of our calling.” Our calling means the whole of our salvation, for through the divine and sovereign call of God by which we have been brought into the family of God, our eternal destiny is

1 William D. Mounce, ed. *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words* (Zondervan, 2006), pp. 340–41.

2 Hoehner, *Ephesians*, p. 510.

secured. Thus, the fact that he emphasizes that there is “one hope of our calling” means that all who are truly saved by God’s grace through faith in the person and work of Yeshua have one and the same “calling,” that is, to be conformed to the image of Messiah and to therefore be unified in this one calling, for we all are children in God’s family and members of the same body in Messiah. And since all who are in the body of Messiah have the same eternal destination, dwelling forever in the very presence of our risen Lord and Savior Yeshua, it only makes sense that we would unite together in the journey to aid each other along the way.

... *one Lord, one faith, one baptism*, – Paul began this section with a triad of “ones,” namely, “one body,” “one Spirit,” and “one hope of your calling.” Now he continues with a second triad of “ones,” and we may speculate that this pattern indicates he was using part of a hymn or even something from a messianic synagogue liturgy extant in his time. This second triad is composed of three Greek nouns, one masculine (“Lord”), one feminine (“faith”) and one neuter (“baptism”). If this was done intentionally, it may well be that it was done to emphasize that unity in the body of Messiah is bringing together those who are called from the diversity of mankind.

“One Lord” (εἰς κύριος, *heis kurios*) clearly refers to Yeshua Who is Lord (*kurios*), the Greek title used most often in the Lxx to translate the Tetragrammaton יהוה, YHVH. In Ephesians, Paul uses the triple Name “Lord Yeshua Messiah” seven times,¹ a combination which emphasizes Yeshua’s deity, humanity, and sovereign kingship of the universe while at the same time extolling His infinite oneness with the Father and the Spirit Who, as One, rule over all. All who are true believers in the one true God serve the same Lord; we do not answer to several bosses.

“One faith” (μία πίστις, *mia pistis*) could be taken as either subjective or as objective. If subjective, Paul is emphasizing the exercise of faith and trust in Yeshua as their Savior which each believer exercises. This is how Paul has used the word “faith” in the previous chapters of our epistle (1:15; 2:8; 3:12, 17). However, in the immediate context of our chapter (v. 13), Paul uses “faith” in its objective sense, that is, as that which encompasses the essential truths which all true believers confess as foundational to biblical salvation.

until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of

¹ Eph. 1:2–3, 17; 3:11; 5:20; 6:23–24

the stature which belongs to the fullness of Messiah. (Eph 4:13)

It seems likely that Paul is transitioning in our chapter from “subjective” faith as means of entering into Messiah and the salvation found only in Him, to the objective aspect of faith, that is, the body of belief that all who are in Messiah affirm together. In fact, this objective use of the term “faith” is common in Paul’s writings. A good example is to be found in 1Tim 4:6.

In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Messiah Yeshua, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine (ἐντρεφόμενος τοῖς λόγοις τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς καλῆς διδασκαλίας) which you have been following. (1Tim 4:6)¹

Thus, “one faith” in our context should most likely be understood to mean one body of truth which the believer accepts and to which he or she seeks to be conformed in all matters of belief and practice. This therefore likewise emphasizes the fact that the word of God itself, the Bible, is that which is the singular and authoritative word which defines the “one faith.” Thus *sola scriptura*, the word of God alone is the final judge in all matters relating to our faith and how we are to live out our faith in Yeshua.

“One baptism” (ἐν βάπτισμα, *hen baptisma*) – The meaning of this phrase has been much debated by the commentators, seeking to discern whether Paul is referring to water baptism as the public, initiatory ritual of entry into the local *eklessia* or referring to “Spirit baptism” defined by some as the indwelling presence of the Ruach which takes place when saving faith in Yeshua is exercised, but understood by others to be a special endowment or “baptism” of the Ruach subsequent to one’s initial exercise of saving faith.

In reality, it is only because of the prevalence of charismatic teachings in our times which causes the question to be asked, for the Scriptures use the concept of “baptism,” i.e., immersion, to speak both metaphorically about being “immersed into Messiah” as well as physically to describe the initiatory ritual, i.e., “immersed into water,” commanded by Yeshua for those who would become His disciples by faith in Him (Matt 28:19–20).

¹ Note also Col 1:23; 2:7; 1Tim 3:9; 4:1.

The only other time Paul uses the Greek noun βάπτισμα (*baptisma*) is in Rom 6:3–4, and here he refers to water baptism as a metaphor picturing union with Yeshua in His death and resurrection.

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Messiah Yeshua have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Messiah was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. (Rom 6:3–4)

Those who consider a subsequent “baptism of the Spirit” as evidenced by some special gift of the Spirit, such as speaking in *glossolalia* (“tongues”), to be that which Paul is referencing, are surely misunderstanding this text, for the point of Paul’s teaching here is that the “one baptism” is characteristic of all who are true believers, not just those endowed with a particular gift of the Spirit. In 1Cor 12 Paul makes it clear that the gift of languages (γλῶσσα, *glōssa*, “tongues,” “languages”), like other gifts of the Spirit (χάρισμα, *xarisma*), are not given to everyone in the *eklessia*.

But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills. (1Cor 12:7–11)

Therefore, what Paul is teaching us in the phrase “one baptism” is that all who are truly members of the body of Messiah through faith in Him have been united with Him in His death and resurrection, and that the ritual of water baptism which they have undergone is a visible picture of this union. Once again, the primary point in Paul’s list of “ones” is that they all necessarily attached to the One and only Savior, Yeshua. Note the comment of F. F. Bruce on “one baptism.”

As for the “one baptism,” it is beside the point to ask whether it is baptism in water or the baptism of the Spirit: it is Christian baptism—baptism “into the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 8:16; 19:5; cf. 1 Cor 1:13–15) which indeed involved the

application of water, ..., but ... was closely associated with the gift of the Spirit.¹

In the end, we may rightly conclude that Paul's meaning in the phrase "one baptism" is this: that saving faith in Yeshua brings the redeemed sinner in union with Messiah Yeshua—union with Him in His death and resurrection, so that the life of the believer is forever one with his or her Savior, and that this confession of faith and thus union with Yeshua and His *eklessia* ought to be made public through the ritual of being immersed in water, itself a sign of the fact that the believer has died to the life of unrighteousness and has been resurrected to new life in Messiah Yeshua, and life characterized by righteousness.

... *one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.* – The two triads listing six "ones" – one body, one Spirit, one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, is now concluded by the climax of "one God and Father" Who is described as "over all, through all and in all." This seems clearly reminiscent of the Shema (Deut 6:4ff), for since God is the "only one" (ἑἷς, *'echad*), i.e., the only true and living God, He alone created the universe, sustains it, and brings all things to their divinely appointed purpose.

The identical phrase "God and Father" (θεός και πατήρ, *theos kai patēr*) is found five other times in the Apostolic Scriptures, always in the context of a blessing or prayer.² The question arises as to how we should understand the inclusive use of the word "all" (πάς, *pas*) found four times in this concluding triumphal phrase and the seventh use of the word "one." Since the form the Greek word *pas*, "all," is identical whether in the masculine plural or neuter plural, two different interpretations are available. If taken to be masculine, then the "all" refers to believers in the family of God. This would resonate with what Paul has already affirmed, that

God is the adoptive Father of believers (1:5) and that they have free access to their Father by means of the "one" Spirit (2:18). The statement that God is "over all and through all and in all," moreover, coheres nicely with the picture of God ruling over the church through Christ its head (1:20–23) and, by the Spirit, giving access to God (2:18) and indwelling his people (2:22).³

1 F. F. Bruce, *Ephesians*, pp. 336–37.

2 Eph 1:3; 2Cor 1:3; 11:31; 1Thess 3:11; 1Pet 1:3. Note also Rom 15:6; Gal 1:4; Phil 4:20; 1Thess 3:13; Rev 1:6.

3 Theilman, *Ephesians*, p. 258.

Others, however,¹ see Paul using the Greek *pas* as neuter and thus to indicate God’s rule over the entire universe as well as His sovereign power to bring all things to their divine purposes, and to sum up all things in Messiah (1:10). And, as Theilman notes, Paul’s use of the expression “all things” in Ephesians supports the interpretation that “over all and through all and in all” of our verse portrays the sovereignty of God over the entire universe.

He will sum up “all things” (τὰ πάντα, *ta panta*) in Messiah (1:10).

He works “all things” (τὰ πάντα) to accomplish His will (1:11).

He has subjected “all things” (πάντα) to Messiah (1:22).

He has created “all things” (τὰ πάντα; 3:9).

He is the Father who names “every” (πᾶσα, *pasa*) family, whether earthly or heavenly (3:15).²

God, Father, Son and Spirit, is “over all” since He is the creator of the entire universe (3:9), named all the tribes of the universe (3:15), and has subjected all things to Messiah Yeshua (1:22). He is “through all” and “in all” in that He is summing up all things in Messiah (1:10) and is working all things according to the council of His own will (1:11).

The summary then is this: since God is working all things according to His own sovereign will, summing all things up in the person of Messiah Yeshua, and working in the *eklessia* by the power of His Ruach, surely those who are truly His should endeavor in every way to manifest the “unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace” (4:3).

1 Including Theilman, *Ephesians*, p. 258.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 259–60.