

Paul's Letter to the *EPHESIANS*

CHAPTERS 4, 5, 6: *God's Plan for the Church* (the Body of Christ)

Principles for Unity (4:1-6)

4:1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling¹ you have received.

[¹*klesis*: summons] Paul mentioned being a “prisoner for the Lord”, as a reminder that being an obedient Christian can be costly^{Luke 14:25-33}. The “then” is often translated “therefore”, indicating a transition (a common aspect in Paul’s letters^{Romans 12:1, 2 Corinthians 4:1}) from doctrine^{Ephesians 1-3} to duty^{Ephesians 4-6}. A worthy life implies a distinctly better life-style than non-believers^{Philippians 1:27, Colossians 1:10-12, 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12}, which is achievable through the power of the Holy Spirit^{Acts 1:8, Romans 15:18-19}. All saints have a “calling”^{Romans 8:28} from God. The “calling” Paul referred to is salvation^{Romans 11:28-29, Philippians 3:12-14, Hebrews 3:1-6}, as well as the holy life that should follow^{2 Thessalonians 1:11-12, 2 Timothy 1:8-10}.

The phrase “live a life” is often translated “walk”^{1 John 2:6, 2 John 1:6} and refers to daily conduct.

4:2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient², bearing with one another in love.

[²*makrothumia*: a long-holding of the mind before it gives way to action] Completeness in everything (“perfection”^{Matthew 5:48}) should always be the goal of the follower of Christ. Humility was not a term in Latin or Greek in the first century, but is a foundational virtue for believers^{Proverbs 3:34}, and was encouraged by^{Luke 14:11} and modeled by^{Philippians 2:5-8} Jesus. Gentleness^{Galatians 5:22-23} implies mild-spirited and self-controlled behavior^{Colossians 3:12-13}. And, being patient (literally: long-tempered) is also a virtue^{1 Thessalonians 5:14-15, James 5:10-11}. Love is the binding attribute enabling believers to exhibit the virtues listed above^{1 Peter 4:8}.

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4:3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. The Holy Spirit promotes unity ("a spirit of unity" ^{Romans 15:5-6}) among all true believers ^{1 Corinthians 12:11-13}. Also, God requires believers to live in harmony and to be willing "to associate with people of low position" ^{Romans 12:14-16} and to be concerned about "the interests of others" ^{Philippians 2:1-4}. All Godly traits (including peace) are bound together by love in "perfect unity" ^{Colossians 3:12-15}. The "unity" Paul described in this chapter is not the world's idea of unity, which refers to the support/affirmation of anything a leader in power is promoting, whether it is Godly or not. Paul emphasized a unity which is rooted in "truth" ^{1 Timothy 3:9} and in "Christ" ^{Ephesians 1:7-10}. Note that in the next three verses, Paul lists the areas of Christian unity (oneness), with an emphasis on the Trinity: the Holy Spirit (v.4), the Son (v.5), and the Father (v.6)

4:4 There is one body and one Spirit - just as you were called to one hope when you were called ¹
The church is one body ^{1 Corinthians 12:20-30} (composed of every believer from Pentecost ^{Acts 1-2} to the Rapture ^{1 Corinthians 15:51-52}), unified through work of the Holy Spirit ^{1 Corinthians 12:7-14}. The "one hope" is the promised eternal inheritance, sealed by the Holy Spirit ^{Ephesians 1:11-14}.

4:5 – one Lord, one faith, one baptism ³; [³*baptisma*: the result of the act of immersion]
There is only one Lord ^{Zechariah 14:9}; only means of salvation ^{Acts 4:12}, one faith ^{Philippians 1:27}; a faith rooted in the One who is eternal ^{Ephesians 2:8-9} and one baptism ^{Mark 1:4-8}; an immersion in the One who brings the reality and power of everlasting life alive ^{Joel 2:28, Acts 2:1-4, 19:4-6}.

4:6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. In addition to the earlier unique aspects of the Christian faith ^{v.5}, there is also only one God ^{Deuteronomy 6:4, Mark 12:29} and Father of all ^{1 Corinthians 8:5-6}, who is the "all-in-all" ^{1 Corinthians 15:28}.

Deuteronomy 6:4 is the first line in the Jewish affirmation of Judaism and a declaration of faith in one God, which is called the Shema (*shěmá*: "hear"). The Jewish prayer of Shema is in the Siddur (*siddur*: "order"), the traditional Jewish prayer book, and it consists of three Scriptural passages ^{Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:13-21, Numbers 15:37-41}. This text is the most sacred of Jewish prayers, and is recited twice a day (morning and evening) by Orthodox Jews.