
The Grace of God in New Covenant Living

Ephesians 4 - 6

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God has called us together as His people. He has chosen us, redeemed us, unified us and revealed His purposes that were hidden in the Old Testament and in the Old Covenant age. We are now in the New Covenant. This great truth permeates chapters 4 through 6 of Ephesians.

We have expounded in some detail these great paragraphs from Paul's magnificent letter. In wrapping up our study in Ephesians and bringing our summaries to a close, I wanted to overview these chapters. We will not comment on them much. The text of the New Living Translation interwoven with an outline.

One of the aims in my own study was to be able to think my way through a book. This has been a great blessing both in preparing and in learning it. One of the sad things of growing older is not being able to remember it all. But I would commend to you both the memorization of the text and being able to recall the flow of the text.

The following is an overview of this section of Ephesians. The key word that ties the argument together is walk. It means our "manner of life" or "our lifestyle."

Our Walk in the Grace of God 4:1-6:9

Walk of our Ministry 4:1-16

Unity - To Be Humbly Maintained (v.1-6)

Its Overarching Plea (v.1)

Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.

Its Required Practices (v.2-3)

² Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. ³ Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.

Its Theological Principles (v.4-6)

⁴ For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. ⁵ There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all.

The Unity of the Spirit

The Unity of the Son

The Unity of the Father

Diversity - To Be Gratefully Embraced (v.7-10)

Its Foundational Principle (v.7)

⁷ However, he has given each one of us a special gift through the generosity of Christ.

Its Scriptural Parallel (v.8)

⁸ That is why the Scriptures say, "When he ascended to the heights, he led a crowd of captives and gave gifts to his people."

Its Explanatory Parenthetical (v.9-10)

⁹ Notice that it says "he ascended." This clearly means that Christ also descended to our lowly world. ¹⁰ And the same one who descended is the one who ascended higher than all the heavens, so that he might fill the entire universe with himself.

Ministry - To Be Diligently Sustained (v.11-16)

Its Practical Description (v.11-12)

¹¹ Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. ¹² Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. ¹³ This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

People - God's Gift to the Church (v.11)

Process - God's Grace in the Church (v.12)

Purpose - God's Goal for the Church (v.13)

Unified body of doctrine - held and lived by all

Intimate knowledge of Christ - a vital, true and real relationship

Maturity measured by Christ - standard of maturity set by Jesus

All this yields the fullness of Christ in our truth, experience and maturity.

Its Maturing Design (v.14-15)

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. ¹⁵ Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church.

Growing from Infancy to Maturity

Moving from Vulnerability to Error to Speaking Truth in Love

Its Spiritual Dynamic (v.16)

¹⁶ He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

Walk with our Community 4:17-32

The Principles to be Understood (4:17-24)

¹⁷ With the Lord's authority I say this: Live no longer as the Gentiles do, for they are hopelessly confused. ¹⁸ Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him. ¹⁹ They have no sense of shame. They live for lustful pleasure and eagerly practice every kind of impurity.

²⁰ But that isn't what you learned about Christ. ²¹ Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, ²² throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. ²³ Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. ²⁴ Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.

The Practices to be Cultivated (4:25-32)

²⁵ So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body. ²⁶ And “don't sin by letting anger control you.” Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ for anger gives a foothold to the devil.

²⁸ If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need. ²⁹ Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.

³⁰ And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.

³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. ³² Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

Walk in our Purity (5:1-6:9)

Forgiveness in our Relationships (5:1-2)

Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. ² Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.

Holiness in our Sexuality (5:3-5)

³ Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God's people. ⁴ Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God. ⁵ You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world.

Separateness in our Conduct (5:6-14)

⁶ Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins, for the anger of God will fall on all who disobey him. ⁷ Don't participate in the things these people do. ⁸ For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light! ⁹ For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true.

¹⁰ Carefully determine what pleases the Lord. ¹¹ Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, expose them. ¹² It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret. ¹³ But their evil intentions will be exposed when the light shines on them, ¹⁴ for the light makes everything visible. This is why it is said, “Awake, O sleeper, rise up from the dead, and Christ will give you light.”

Spiritualness in our Worship (5:15-21)

¹⁵ So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. ¹⁶ Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. ¹⁷ Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do. ¹⁸ Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit, ¹⁹ singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts. ²⁰ And give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Submission in our Roles (5:21)

²¹ And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Submission in our Wives (5:22-24)

²² For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. ²³ For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. ²⁴ As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything.

Sacrifice in our Husbands (5:25-33)

²⁵ For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her ²⁶ to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. ²⁷ He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. ²⁸ In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. ²⁹ No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. ³⁰ And we are members of his body.

³¹ As the Scriptures say, "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one." ³² This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one. ³³ So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Obedience in our Children (6:1-4)

Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do. ² "Honor your father and mother." This is the first commandment with a promise: ³ If you honor your father and mother, "things will go well for you, and you will have a long life on the earth."

⁴ Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord.

Usefulness in our Work (6:5-9)

⁵ Slaves, obey your earthly masters with deep respect and fear. Serve them sincerely as you would serve Christ. ⁶ Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you. As slaves of Christ, do the will of God with all your heart. ⁷ Work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. ⁸ Remember that the Lord will reward each one of us for the good we do, whether we are slaves or free.

Our Warfare in the Grace of God (6:10-24)

Warfare by Preparation (6:10-17)

The Exhortation

¹⁰ A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

Be strong...

The Enemy (6:10b-12)

¹⁰ A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. ¹² For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

His Craftiness

His Company

The Equipment (6:13-17)

¹³ Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. ¹⁴ Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. ¹⁵ For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. ¹⁶ In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. ¹⁷ Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Warfare by Prayer (6:18-19a)

¹⁸ Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

¹⁹ And pray for me, too.

Its Characteristics

Standing for truth is to be bathed in prayer.

It is marked by being in the Spirit.

It is multifaceted in its expression.

Its Concerns

We should be wakeful and watchful.

We should persevere.

We should have a world-wide view in our praying.

Warfare by Proclamation (6:19-20)

Ask God to give me the right words so I can boldly explain God's mysterious plan that the Good News is for Jews and Gentiles alike. ²⁰ I am in chains now, still preaching this message as God's ambassador. So pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should.

Through Clear Preaching

With Courageous Preaching

Warfare alongside Partners (6:21-24)

Ministry Encouraging Relationships (6:21-22)

²¹ To bring you up to date, Tychicus will give you a full report about what I am doing and how I am getting along. He is a beloved brother and faithful helper in the Lord's work. ²² I have sent him to you for this very purpose—to let you know how we are doing and to encourage you.

Grace Based Relationships (6:23-24)

²³ Peace be with you, dear brothers and sisters, and may God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you love with faithfulness. ²⁴ May God's grace be eternally upon all who love our Lord Jesus Christ.