

Text: Ephesians Chapters 4 through 6

Title: The Christian Life

Truth: God gives in these chapters an overview of the Christian life.

Date/Location: May 17, 2020 at FBC

Introduction

Lately the life of the church has been reduced to the basics—the necessities.

Frills and bells and whistles have had to drop off for the time being. In a way that is a very good thing, because it reminds us of what is essential and what is not. It has focused us on what we *can* do instead of what we cannot. In this message, I want to **explain** and **apply** the text of Ephesians 4 through 6 in a brief manner so as to exemplify these basics of the faith. Our goal is to **understand** what Paul is saying and **obey** it.

Walk worthy – chapter four begins the “therefore” of Paul’s doctrine of salvation in chapters 1–3. He has taught us about God’s eternal plan, about the great gift of Christ’s atonement, about the work of the Trinity in salvation, about our spiritual state prior to salvation, that salvation is by grace through faith, how Gentiles and Jews are joined in the church, and recorded a couple of prayers for God’s people.

Now, how does the Christian life look *in practice*? How does one live in a way that is suitable to our calling? How do we conduct ourselves in a manner comparable in worth or value to what God through Christ has done for and to us? God has called us to be a holy people (2 Timothy 1:9). See also Col. 1:10 and 1 Thess. 2:12.

I. Walk in Unity, 4:1-16

A. Command, v. 1-3. The exhortation to unity is part and parcel of walking in a manner worthy of Christ. The Bible teaches the basic character that is required for this right away—a humble spirit that works out in meekness toward others and patient love. Individually we do this to foster the unity of the body of Christ produced by the Holy Spirit. If something **undermines that unity** or **fails to cultivate** the holy, humble unity of the church, then the Scriptures oppose that something.

B. Basis of Unity, v. 4-6. We share a single faith given by one God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—which is signified by one body, a shared hope, and a single baptism that unites us into the body of Christ. The unity is produced in us by the Holy Spirit (v. 3) and it originates with the realities mentioned in verses 4-6.

C. Growth of Unity, v. 7-16. By God's grace, we participate in maintaining and even increasing this unity by using the grace-gifts God has given us to build up the body, to equip it to live for the Lord, do the work of ministry, and edify the assembly. This continues forever until we all come to the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God. Paul wants us not to be tossed about with strange doctrine but be conversant with and in the truth so that the body will grow. The picture is of a group of believers busily working like bees to "level up" the church in its maturity, faith, knowledge, unity, love, stability, etc.

Broadly speaking, people do not spend much effort or time to build the body. They build their career or house or bank account or family. But what about the body of Christ? What about the church – locally and globally? But this is the purpose of the gifts that Christ has given to us, and the equipping with which He outfits us!

II. Walk in Holiness, 4:17-32

We live with a practical unity in Christ. We enhance that by living holy lives. Sin is the quickest way to destroy unity and cause division in the church.

A. Not as Gentiles, v. 17-18. The Christian lifestyle is distinctive. But more than that, it is a life in which we understand the life and mind of God. We are no longer dull or darkened to those spiritual realities.

B. As instructed in the Gospel. When we "learned Christ" was when we were saved. At that time we put off the old man, we were renewed in our minds (so as not to be darkened and alienated), and we put on the new man. This is not something that is done every day of our lives. It happened once. But it is something that obviously has implications every day. If we are a "new man" now, then we ought to wear new clothing and live in a new way and think in a new way, and be continuously washed and renewed in the life of Christ.

C. As directed in the Epistle. We must be renewed in our speech, in our temper, in working diligently, in truth, in purity, and in forgiveness.

III. Walk in Love, 5:1-7

A. Command. Actually the command involves something else: to be imitators of God. And since God *is* love, it makes sense that we would walk in love.

B. Example. Christ's loving self-sacrifice is *the* example of love. It is the standard of a husband's love for his wife (5:25) and a shepherd's love for his sheep, and all true and pure love can exist anywhere.

- C. Avoid unloving behaviors. Sins of uncleanness and bad speech, or greed, or idolatry all demonstrate selfish love, but that is not true love. True love cannot be selfish. Love for God constrains us not to sin against Him, and love for our fellow people constrains us not to damage them.

IV. Walk in the Light, 5:8-14

Light is the opposite of darkness, as holiness is the opposite of sin, and as righteousness is the opposite of unrighteousness.

- A. Command, v. 8. The command is very simple. Shine the light that you have for the Lord (Matt. 5:16).
- B. Reason, v. 9. You are to walk in light because the Spirit of God who lives in you produces such fruit as goodness, righteousness, and truth. Submit to His work in your life; humble yourself before Him and watch how He produces such fruit.
- C. Making effort to discern the best in the eyes of the Lord, v. 10-14. In this humbling before God, you set your mind to find the best ways to live for Him, living closest to the light instead of shying away from it. People love darkness (John 3:19), but the believing person hates darkness and doesn't want to come nigh to it. The problem is that we carry within us a repository of darkness in our sin nature, and so we have to fight the darkness from within as well as the darkness from outside. This continues until God removes that darkness entirely at the Rapture or when we move to heaven through death.

V. Walk in Wisdom, 5:15-21

- A. Wisdom is the skillful application of the Word of God to the various circumstances of life.
- B. Time is something of a mysterious quantity, passing by us without energy or effort on its part. But the things that exist during the passage of time can be either redeemed things or unredeemed. The world is full of the latter. Our lives are to be full of the former. Wisdom demands it, for it is foolish to waste time partaking of the evil things of the age.
- C. God's will is not at all mysterious, though people have made it seem more difficult than it is. We are *not* looking for some secret will of God for our lives. If we do that, we are utterly wasting our time and not living wisely. Rather, the will of God is revealed in the word of God. Time spent searching out God's will there always yields a good crop.
- D. Filling by the Spirit and its Results

1. Definition. Filling of the Spirit is often spoken of as an on-again-off-again phenomenon in the moment. That intermittent idea is more appropriate when speaking about our obedience. The Spirit of God is not as transient as that. Filling means *influence*. Just like alcohol influences one's behavior, so the Spirit of God influences our behavior. We have a role to play in that just like a drunk plays a role in his drunkenness. Our role is to intake that which enhances the Spirit's influence in our lives instead of quells it. For example, the Spirit influences us so that we control ourselves, our passions, our minds, our emotions.
2. Results of Spirit filling: speaking, singing, making melody in song; giving thanks; and submitting. The application of submitting is found in the following verses,

VI. Applying the Worthy Walk, 5:22-6:20

- A. Family Relationships: husbands, wives, parents, children. We don't have space to report on all of this, but we can summarize: husbands are to love their wives like Christ loved the church; wives are to submit to their husbands and respect them. Children are to obey their parents and parents are to raise their children gently and in the instruction of the Lord.
- B. Slaves and masters. We have dealt with the difficult notion of New Testament slavery, and we understand that this has a somewhat distant application to employers and employees.
- C. Standing strong in the Lord in the spiritual battle of life, with spiritual virtue, the Word of God, and prayer. We must clothe ourselves with truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, salvation. We must be able to use the sword of the Spirit and always in prayer because the enemy is a spiritual enemy, not a physical merely human one.

Conclusion

If you walk in unity, holiness, love, light, and wisdom, then you will be doing God's will. If you apply these things to your family and employment, and church, and interaction with the unsaved world, then you will please God with your conduct.

We never forget that this is all of grace, but we have a responsible role that we must occupy.

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