

4:1–6 Saved to Walk in Unity

Paul has been speaking of the amazing power of God (3:20)—but he himself is still a prisoner! Instead of demanding his freedom, he uses his status as one who suffers for the Lord to add weight to his call to the Christians in Ephesus to live a life that will glorify the Lord (4:1). This is what they were called to do, as was explained in chapters 1–3. What we believe must manifest itself in the way we live.

The characteristics that the believers are to display include humility, not because we are inferior to other people but because we do not regard ourselves as better than others. Christ demonstrated that humility is the basis of service, honour, respect and love for others. We are also to be *gentle*, that is, considerate of others and not seeking to dominate them. This calls for patience to restrain the desire to seek revenge or to escape when others annoy us. Our forbearance is what enables us to put up with the attitudes, manners and faults of others (4:2). All of these virtues make for unity and love among believers, as Paul reminds them (4:3).

The believers' unity is based on the Trinity. The Holy *Spirit* is the one who has *called* both Jews and Gentiles into the *one body* of Christ, the church, and has given them all a shared *hope* in Christ (4:4; see also 1:13–14). Christ is the Head of the church and its only *Lord* and Master, and the believers are also united by their shared *faith* in him (4:5). This faith has led them to identify with his death and resurrection by being baptized as a physical sign that they are part of the one body of Christ. Ultimately, however, our unity and oneness are rooted in the sovereignty of God, who is the only creator of the entire universe and thus has absolute authority over all of creation (4:6).¹

5:15–20 Live Wisely

If we are to live lives of holiness and light, we must think carefully about our conduct and behaviour (5:15). The evil in society affords us opportunities to shine as lights for our Lord (5:16). We need to learn to recognize these opportunities that God gives us to witness to him and must seek to understand God's will in all situations and circumstances (5:17).

Drunkenness does not make for wisdom and discernment. It also often leads to a careless and aimless life dominated by wild living, squandering of money and resources, and an excessive appetite for pleasures. Thus believers should avoid it. Instead of being under the influence of alcohol, believers are to be under the influence of the Holy Spirit (5:18).

The filling with the Holy Spirit can even be mistaken for drunkenness at times (see Acts 2:13). But where drunkenness leads to raucous singing and shouting, being filled with the Holy Spirit leads to praise expressed in *psalms, hymns and spiritual songs* (5:19). The instruction to *make music* implies that a variety of musical instruments and rhythms can be used. God is not concerned with the type of music but with its content, which is worship, thanksgiving and praise to God and Jesus Christ. The ultimate goal of the Spirit is to bring honour to God and Jesus Christ, and that is why *always giving thanks* is one of the signs that we are filled with the Holy Spirit (5:20). Whatever happens to us, we can still give thanks for God's love and mercy that have given us salvation and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Our songs and thanksgiving are directed to God the Father *in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ* because he is the only one through whom we can come to God (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

5:21–6:9 Live Responsibly

Submission and obedience to Christ should govern all our relationships and responsibilities at home and at work. A consequence of this is that we are also to submit to one another, that is, to show respect for each other (5:21; see also John 13:13–15).²

¹ Tokunboh Adeyemo, *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi, Kenya; Grand Rapids, MI: WordAlive Publishers; Zondervan, 2006), 1459.

² Tokunboh Adeyemo, *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi, Kenya; Grand Rapids, MI: WordAlive Publishers; Zondervan, 2006), 1462.