

# Ephesians Chapter Four

## OVERVIEW OF THE FLOW OF CHAPTERS FOUR TO SIX

Here's a brief overview of the flow of the second half of Ephesians. In chapters 1-3 the Gospel is explored. But from chapter 4-6 it is applied to our lives. The first three chapters have almost nothing for us to do. They focus on what we so desperately need spiritual understanding of and what God has already done for us. They have helped us to love the Gospel. Now the focus is on how our lives need to be different in light of these Gospel-revelations. We will learn how to live the Gospel. Here is the flow...

### ***Chapters 4-6: Application of the Gospel to our lives and churches...***

- *Applying the Gospel to the church's unity and maturity (4:1-16)*
- *Applying the Gospel to holiness in general terms - first what we must not be (4:17-19) and then what we should be (4:20-24).*
- *Applying the Gospel to godliness in more specific terms: Truth (4:25), Anger (4:26-27), Stealing (4:28), Talk (4:29-30), Kindness (4:31-5:2), Common sins (5:3-7).*
- *Two other ways of approaching holiness / godliness:*
  - *We are light, so we must be full of light (5:8-14)*
  - *We have the Spirit, so we must be filled with the Spirit (5:15-21)*
- *Three sets of relationships where we work out godliness:*
  - *Husbands and wives (5:22-33)*
  - *Parents and children (6:1-4)*
  - *Servants and employees (6:5-9)*
- *The devil and the Christian's armour (6:10-20)*
- *Conclusion (6:21-24).*

## UNITY IN COMMUNITY (4:1-6)

A major transition happens in Paul's letter now. In chapters 1-3, the Gospel has been expounded. Now, in chapters 4-6 it will be applied to our lives and churches. We will see that now that we have received this calling to salvation (4:1) we need to live a life worthy of it. However, notice that there is a two-step transition. The first is 4:1 (this first application, flowing out of this revelation of the church, is that we need to pursue unity) and the second is 4:17 onwards (where Paul starts speaking about personal and relational godliness).

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

- **Salvation is only possible through God's calling us into his kingdom.**
  - 'the calling you have received' - this echoes the way he has called us to hope (1:18) and also looks ahead to verse 4. What is this calling? It describes the moment God called us into his kingdom through a combination of insight into the Gospel (usually through hearing someone preach / explain it) and the powerful drawing power of the Spirit. That is why salvation is not best described as our choice to follow Jesus, but Christ's powerful call on our lives into his kingdom. John 6:44 tells us that the only way to be saved is to be drawn by God. In Acts 16:44 it says that God opened Lydia's heart to the Gospel - this is another way of describing this calling.
  - Is this call resistible? Although it is possible to resist the movings of God on your heart, Romans 8:30 says that all those he called he also justified. So it appears that this describes a salvation moment, not just a stirring in the heart that can be resisted.
  
- **We should demonstrate in our lives what God has done for / to us in salvation.**
  - 'I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.'
  - The word 'worthy' comes from the same root-word for axis - in other words it describes a point around which other things revolve. As Christ exerts his power of salvation in us we can expect to see a change in our lives. Our life needs to spin around this central defining reality, this axis of our salvation.
  - This thought echoes 2:10 where it is clear that we are not saved *by* good works, but we are saved *for* good works.
  - Salvation is something so powerful, Paul has explained, that as we grow in insight into it, it is a no-brainer that something in our lives should change.

- **Being saved does not always automatically result in significant life-change.**
  - The very fact that Paul is urging us to live out this salvation in our lives shows that a changed life is not automatic - it requires our co-operation.
  - Many people develop a theology which says that if you're saved your life will automatically change, and if it doesn't it shows that very likely you are not saved at all. But then why would Paul still need to urge us to pursue a changed life? No, it is quite possible that a person is saved, and sadly they do not understand the insights of chapters 1-3 (i.e. they do not get insight into the calling they have received) and they refuse the urgings to change.
  
- **Living out our salvation could come at a cost, but it's worth it.**
  - Paul sets an example of living out his salvation, whatever the cost. He speaks as a prisoner in the Lord. He is not saying that living out your salvation is going to be understood by all, but despite the challenges; it is the only sane thing to do. Salvation is so potent that it calls for a potent approach to life.

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

- **We should let Christ's calling translate into Christ-like character.**
  - One way that we live out this calling into God's kingdom and God's community is by developing Christ-like character in how we relate to each other.
  - Humility, gentleness, patience, and bearing with one another (i.e. putting up with each other's character flaws, idiosyncrasies etc) and all of this in love - these are the character traits we need to nurture in our lives. And they all are community-benefiting.
  - Community with people who lack these traits will double our sorrows, whereas community with people who have these traits will half our sorrows and double our joys.
  
- **There are various degrees of humility, patience, gentleness and love.**
  - The word 'completely' suggests there are various degrees of these things in our lives.
  - So we let ourselves off the hook when we say, 'I'm humble. I'm patient.' Rather we should be seeking God for deeper experiences of these character traits.

3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

- **The unity of the Spirit already exists amongst those who are saved, but we need to make an effort to keep it.**
  - We do not try to create the unity, we merely try to keep it.
  - The peace of the Spirit is already the back-ground hum of saved people who are in community, but we need to do all we can to keep it, to protect it, to sing along with it.
  - There will be times when we will be tempted toward disunity, but we need to do everything we can to protect that unity.
  - We need to give ourselves to a 'bond of peace' - i.e. a commitment to be at peace with each other, as far as it depends on us.

4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

- **The unity of the Spirit is there because of seven unifying aspects of salvation.**
  - All Christians are really part of one **body**. In a sense every local church is a body, but in this sense the worldwide church of God is one body.
  - All Christians have the same **Spirit** living in them, and working amongst them.
  - All Christians have the same God-given certainty or **hope** about the future.
  - All Christians confess Jesus as **Lord**.
  - All Christians have **faith** in the same Saviour.
  - All Christians have been **baptised** by the Spirit into the same body - notice that Eaton suggests this verse does not refer to water-baptism but to the body-baptism of the Spirit mentioned more clearly in 1 Cor 12:13
  - All Christians experience the same **Father** ruling *over* them, pervasively amongst them (i.e. *through* them), and living *in* them.
  - (This is why there is a back-ground hum of unity amongst Christians. The result of salvation, with the above seven facets, is that the God-generated DNA of church is unity - and we best affirm that and protect that!)

## GIFTS FOR THE CHURCH (4:7-11)

7 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

- **We should protect the variety of the Spirit too.**
  - In the previous verses we have seen how we need to keep the unity of the Spirit. But this verse tells us to protect the diversity of the Spirit too.
  - Although our salvation is the same (see verses 4-6) our Spirit-empowered contribution within church-life will be different.
  - Christ sovereignly gives different measures of grace to various Christians. 'To each one'.
- **We each have a unique Christ-apportioned contribution to make.**
  - We need to accept ourselves and our spiritual gifts. It is no use comparing yourself with another. It is no use trying to imitate a spiritual mentor too closely. The best thing we can do is ask God to reveal to us the grace he has put in us that will be for the good of the church and its mission, and begin to express it.
  - We also need, in the love-based unity of the Spirit, to affirm and celebrate and encourage and receive the contributions of others in community.
- **The contributions we make will ideally flow out of the specific power and grace at work in your life.**
  - Throughout the book of Ephesians, power and grace are used interchangeably. The word grace captures the fact that our gifts are given to us by God's sovereign choice, and they are undeserved.

8 This is why it says:

"When he ascended on high,  
he took many captives  
and gave gifts to his people."

- We can draw two layers of meaning from this quotation of Psalm 68:18.
  - Paul changes Psalm 68:18 here. We will look first at the original wording and draw meaning from that, and then to Paul's rewording and draw another layer of meaning from that...
- **1) Jesus ascended into heaven and took rebels and made them into stones in his temple that he might dwell among them.**
  - Psalm 68:18 is adapted here, but you can see looking at what it originally said why he chose it in the first place to be included here:
    - Ps 68:1 speaks of God arising and scattering his enemies. Although 68:17 speaks of God ascending Sinai, verse 18 then depicts God, through King David, leading prisoners in a procession up Mount Zion and making them part of Israel.

Eaton's translation: 'You have gone up on high. You have led away captive a procession of conquered enemies. You received gifts, gifts consisting of people, people who were once rebels, so that the Lord might dwell amongst them.' God conquered his enemies and made them part of his dwelling (i.e. temple)!

- **2) The people Jesus conquers he then gives as gifts for the benefit of the church.**
  - Paul does not give a pure quotation of Psalm 68:18 but changes it for effect. Instead of quoting 'he received gifts' he quotes 'he gave gifts'.
  - In other words the very people Jesus has conquered he does not just choose to include in his church for his own dwelling, but he chooses to give to the church for its benefit.
  - That is why we need to see every rebel that gets saved not only as a gift for Jesus (the original meaning), but as a gift from Jesus for our blessing as a church (Paul's added meaning).

9 (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? 10 He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)

- **Jesus conquered death and now has total rule over everything!**
  - Paul comments on the phrase 'he ascended' from Psalm 68:18 where Paul infers that Jesus ascended to the heavenly Zion (not just the earthly one). He asks 'if Jesus went up to heaven, where was he ascending from?' His answer: 'the lower, earthly regions' which simply refers to the realm of the dead. Paul again (as he did in 1:20-23) is saying that Jesus had to conquer death before it could be said he was unrivalled master of all things. But Jesus did resurrect, and then he was exalted to heaven, where he now co-rules the whole universe with his father.
  - 'in order to fill the whole universe' = in order to exercise his kingly rule in the whole universe.

11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers,

- **The exalted Jesus gives a variety of leadership-gifts to his church.**
  - Although it can be said that every single Christian is Christ's gift to the church (v8) and has been apportioned a gift (v7), Paul now draws attention to specific leader-type people in the church whose job it is to equip everyone else to release their gift and to truly be a gift.

- **These leadership-gifts do not refer to the Twelve who were the foundational apostles.**
  - Notice that it is the exalted Jesus who gives these gifts, and that verse 13 makes it clear that these leadership-gifts will be given until the end of the ages. In other words, still today Christ is giving these special leadership-gifts to the church.
  
- **Christ gives *apostles*.**
  - These are pioneer-type people who, like Paul, plant churches, ordain elders, adopt orphan churches, reach large areas for Christ, intervene in troubled churches, make sure the church is properly built upon the Gospel, and make sure the Gospel is going out from the church, and more. They especially are strong in the raising of leaders.
  - Their job also includes equipping others to *go*.
  
- **Christ gives *prophets*.**
  - Although all believers need to seek God for the gift of prophecy, God seems to give some people unusually powerful gifts of prophesy so they could be described as ‘prophets’. These people are quite different to the Old Testament prophets who spoke word-for-word for God. These prophets function in team. Prophets speak for God with the words God gives.
  - Their job also includes equipping others to *prophecy*.
  
- **Christ gives *evangelists*.**
  - These people focus on the Gospel message and have the ability to bring people to a response to it.
  - Their job also includes equipping others to *evangelise*.
  
- **Christ gives *pastors-teachers*.**
  - The Greek wording connects these two words closely. This does not mean they are the same person, but it does suggest that they are closely related.
  - Pastors are teachers who are good with people. Teachers are pastors who are good with exposition of the Word. Pastors intuitively prefer to spend time with people. Teachers with their Bible.
  - In my humble opinion, the reason that pastors-teachers are connected is that they are differentiated from the other three. Here’s why: pastor-teachers are local ministry, whereas the other three are translocal ministry. Pastors and teachers are firmly connected to one church, while the others are connected to many churches.
  - Their job also includes equipping others to *teach*.

## THE GOALS OF LEADERSHIP IN THE BODY OF CHRIST (4:12-16)

12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God ...

- **This five-fold ministry has a very clear purpose.**
  - They are to equip God's people for works of service (i.e. contributions in the church and from the church into the world) so that the church becomes strong and profoundly unified in their shared experience of faith and intimacy with Jesus.
  - They do not do all the work, but exist to equip the rest of the church to do the work.
- **God-given leadership is extremely important for the success of the church.**
  - Jesus is building his church - and his main strategy for building it is to raise up and release five-fold ministry leaders who function in team and who are mature in their leadership.
  - Practically speaking, everything rises and falls on leadership - even the church.
- **Although God has predestined us for good works (see 2:10) he still seeks to train you for those good works.**
  - We need to be equipped. The equipping does not happen automatically upon salvation. The grace is there (4:7) but it needs to be tapped into with a bit of training.
- **The church needs a whole team of differently gifted leaders to be trained in ministry competencies.**
  - There are at least five different kinds of leaders / preachers who train us up in various ways.
  - Despite the apparent success of churches where one star-pastor is the sole equipper of the church, this can never create the strength of disciple and church that God has in mind.
- **A church can only grow strong and united when people begin to make their contributions.**
  - The body of Christ is built up as people do their works of service. No participation + no contribution = no growth for the church.
- **Jesus doesn't have another strategy for his church.**
  - We will need this five-fold ministry until the end of the age or until the church reaches full maturity and unity (which only will happen when Jesus comes back)
  - See the word 'until' in verse 13. God will raise up these kind of leaders from generation to generation. This is his set, timeless plan for growing the church.

- **The church is not winding down.**
  - Although there already exists the unity of the Spirit (as in 4:3) there is still the desired experience of this unity (mentioned here in v13) - which is far greater than we can ever imagine. This verse sets us up for great expectancy about what Jesus will still do in his church in our generation and in generations to come. Far from winding down, the church's future looks brighter than ever.

13 until we ... become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.

- **Leaders should aim at maturing the church. The church should pursue maturity.**
  - Another major goal of the church that the leaders give themselves to is to help the church become as whole / mature / fully functional as possible.
  - Not only does God want the five-fold ministry to equip all for ministry in a way that everyone experiences deeper and deeper levels of being united in faith and intimacy with Christ, but also that they become mature.
  - 'attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ' - to experience all of Jesus and all of his likeness! That is maturity defined: experiencing all of Jesus and all of his likeness.
  - The phrase 'until we become mature' is literally translated 'until we become a full-grown person'. This picks up on the Ephesians 2 metaphor of the church as 'the new man' - the church, and for that matter, each local church is likened to a person who is growing up into maturity and adulthood.
- **Leaders should aim at anchoring the church. The church should pursue stability.**
  - A real test of maturity is the degree to which we are not interested in nor open to fads or heretical teachings, nor are we open to ungodly and manipulative leaders.
  - '14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.'
  - There is so much 'teaching' out there and so many 'teachers' out there who really teach truth combined with heresy, or whose teaching lacks balance and orientates around just one truth at the neglect of other aspects of teaching. Infants are by nature self-centred and gullible. Usually they are prone to teaching that appeals to their selfish ambition and that comes on strong and overrides their God-given responsibility to search the Bible for

themselves (Acts 17:11). Opening ourselves to this teaching and these teachers is going to make us unstable spiritually. We will feel unstable and we will shoot off in one direction and then in another, not given to a consistent course and orientation of life and faith. Sadly, it is not only that these unbiblical teachers are deceived themselves, but they, usually for the benefit of money or power, are willing to deceive and manipulate people.

15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

- **Church maturity can be compared to the growth and functionality of the human body.**
  - instead = as opposed to the childlike instability where we're infants tossed here and there by the wind.
  - speaking the truth in love, we = A major way to and a result of spiritual growth is our ability to hold to our God-given convictions (i.e. speaking the truth) but to not do so in an unloving, nor ungracious manner (i.e. in love).
  - We will in all things grow up = Every Christian experiences growth in every aspect of their lives (i.e. in all things)
  - into him who is the head, that is, Christ = the growth of every Christian and every church is 'into the head, Christ', which effectively means into a deeper fellowship with and obedience to Christ.
  - From him the while body ... grows = As we grow up into Christ, the head (v15), we also begin to grow from Christ, the head. This refers to both numerical growth and spiritual formation growth.
  - Joined and held together by every supporting ligament = Eaton believes this is a reference to the five-fold ministry mentioned in verse 11: they connect churches together in the worldwide church of God.
  - The whole body builds itself up in love, as each part does its work = the church gets stronger as everyone builds loving relationships (i.e. in love) and begins to make their Christ-apportioned contributions in the church and from the church into the world.

### **HATING THE PAST (4:17-19)**

In a sense this word 'so' or 'therefore' of verse 17 (see below) is the real major turning point in the book, perhaps even more so than 4:1 (where it said, 'Live a life worthy of your calling'). This is because 4:1-6 still feels much like chapters 1-3 in its emphasis on unity (1:11-14, 2:11-22 and 3:6 all focus on unity) and in its emphasis on what Christ is doing). It is only now that the focus turns to godliness, and where the ball really is in our court...

17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord,

- **Real life-change flows out of real Gospel-revelation.**
  - The words 'So' or 'Therefore' are very important. This is the way Paul usually calls us to changed lives. He first explores the Gospel, and then says 'therefore' which means that, in light of our great salvation (just explored), we should change. We see the same in Romans 12:1. In other words, in the New Testament, morality flows out of salvation. There is no ethic for unsaved people in the Bible. The closest would be the law of Moses (which boils down to rules to preserve a nation from self-destruction) and the appeals to the conscience of unsaved neighbours by some of the Old Testament prophets (e.g. Amos 1). But Christian morality is never merely motivated by a hunger for right and a rejection of what is wrong. The main motivation is that, in light of this wonderful Gospel, our lives need to change. In the Gospel we are accepted first, and understand that we are accepted; and then we obey. Obedience flows out of acceptance by God in Christ. This is very different to the usual religious instinct which thinks: If I obey God then I will be accepted; if I do the right thing then I will win God's approval. But the religious instinct is totally untrue. It fails to reflect the God of grace.
- **Our authority to call people to change comes from God, the Judge.**
  - The phrase 'and insist on it in the Lord' can be translated 'and I testify to it in the Lord'. The word translated 'insist' or 'testify' is a word used of someone in a court of law who demands action - it carries the authority of a Judge, who in this case is Jesus.

So I tell you that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. 19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

- You are called to be decisively different from people who are not saved, and from how you used to live before we were saved...
- **1) We need to be different in our thinking (v17) and understanding (v18).**
  - The phrase 'thinking' (verse 17) does not refer to intellect as much as to the basic inner attitude to life. Outside of Christ our way of seeing the world is futile: people are gripped by sin, people fail to see reality as it really is with a glorious God at the centre of the universe, people lack the power to say no to sin,

they lack the capacity to make consistently wise decisions, and to cope with life's pressure and with death. The very way of seeing life is meaningless and unproductive. This needs to change once we're saved. Of course not seeing the truth of the Gospel means that no matter how much information we do know, we are blind to the most important, foundational reality of the universe which is the Gospel. Even clever people, who can't see the Gospel, are therefore not so intelligent, despite their intellectual achievements.

- **2) We need to be different in that we remain responsive to, and dependent on the life of God.**
  - Outside of Christ, people are 'separated from the life of God'. This refers to how the fall of the human race caused us to be cut off from the spiritual life of God. Once we are in Christ, however, we are connected again to the life of God that flows to us through Christ and his Spirit. But it is not enough to be connected. We need to use that connection and nurture a responsiveness in our lives toward God.
- **3) We need to be different in that our heart stays tender toward God.**
  - People outside of Christ have hard hearts towards God. This is really another way of saying that they are separated from God's life. They are unresponsive to God's movings. That is why salvation is more than a little bit of information and advice - it is the giving of a brand new heart, a new nature, a new capacity for God. Sadly, Christians can harden their hearts (Hebrews 3 speaks of this) - but we must not. We must nurture a tenderness of heart toward God.
  - This hardness of heart can be described as a lack of sensitivity towards the whispers and movings of God (v19).
- **4) We need to be different in that we don't indulge in the sensuality, impurity and greed / covetousness of our culture.**
  - These all flow out of darkened, futile thinking and a hard heart.
  - Sensuality = loose-living. When we lack revelation of the Gospel we hand ourselves over to our physical desires and appetites. Instead of finding our satisfaction in God's glory we find our main satisfaction in our bodies.
    - Instead of loose-living we are self-controlled.
  - Impurity = without a real sense of right and wrong, our lives are given to things that defile us. We defile our lives with sinful indulgence.
    - Instead of self-defilement we pursue purity.
  - Greed / covetousness is the opposite of contentment.
    - Instead of greed we nurture contentment in our lives.

## BECOMING THE NEW YOU (4:20-24)

20 That, however, is not the way of life you learned 21 when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.

- **When Jesus called us to salvation he called us into a new life.**
  - Verse 21 in the NIV is translated ‘when you heard about Christ’ but in fact the actual Greek, and Eaton’s translation agrees with it, says ‘when you heard Christ.’ This is much like 2:17 which says, ‘He came and preached peace to you.’ This refers to how Jesus is so present with the preacher of the Gospel that Jesus himself preaches to us. It is a reference to the convicting, illuminating, calling work of the Spirit when we hear the Gospel preached. In fact the phrase here translated ‘that is not the way of life you learned’ can be better translated, ‘But you did not learn Christ in that way’. This means that the Spirit uses the Gospel-preached in such a way that we learn Christ and hear Christ. We meet Jesus himself in the Gospel through the power of the Spirit!
  - When we learned Christ and heard him speak to us at the time of our salvation, he put a new instinct toward godliness and an aversion to ungodliness inside of us. He taught us in accordance with the truth that is in himself. In other words, to hear Jesus is to immediately get a sense of his heart for what pleases him.
  - In the verse before it speaks of humanity’s hardness of heart, darkness and the resulting wickedness - but when we hear the Gospel this hardness and darkness and wickedness is exposed - and we understand that to turn to Christ is to turn from this too.
  - Paul is simply asking them to remember that the moment the Gospel preached in the power of the Spirit came through to them, they intuitively sensed Jesus himself saying, ‘I have a new way of life for you. I call you from the darkness into the light. I call you from hardness toward me to tenderness toward me. I call you from wickedness to godliness.’ He is saying, ‘Be true to what Jesus showed you at that time of your salvation.’

22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

- **We need to live lives compatible with our new identity in Christ.**
  - These verses tell us the content of what Jesus himself taught us when we were saved. He taught us three different things...

- **1) Christ taught us to put off the old self (v22).**
  - ‘22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;’
  - What does the ‘old self’ mean? It means the old life I lived that was under the dominion of sin. It was instantly replaced by the ‘new self’ at the moment of salvation. The ‘new self’ is the new me under Christ. Romans 6:1-11 makes it clear that the old self has already died - the moment God put us in Christ he put an end to the old self. This verse is not telling us to put an end to the old self, but rather to freshly affirm that, since our old self is already gone, we need to refuse old self behaviour (which is typically marked by ‘passions and deceits’).
  - To understand the theology of new self and old self better it is helpful to understand a few things:
    - Romans 6:1-11 describes how the old self is already dead since we are in Christ. It describes what God does. But then, in light of this, Ephesians 4:22-24 and Colossians 3:9-10 tell us to therefore get rid of old self behaviour. It describes what we are to do, in light of what God has done. Said another way, Romans 6 tells us the old has gone and the new has come. Ephesians and Colossians tell us to live like it now. In other words, let your behaviour conform to your identity.
    - We must not confuse ‘the sinful nature’ with ‘the old self’. In Paul’s theology, the old self is one’s spiritual identity before they came to Christ. That identity is now dead. We cannot kill something which is already dead - the old self is dead. However, we still experience the sinful nature, which is the ‘pull toward sin’ even though we are new creations. Saying yes to temptation was totally compatible with the old self, but it is totally incompatible with the new self. So the new self and the sinful nature are at conflict with each other in the life of a Christian.
- **2) Christ taught us to see life in a brand new way (v23).**
  - ‘23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds;’
  - Our very way of thinking and seeing changes when we are saved. God and his kingdom begin to change our mentality about life. We begin to see life a little more from God’s perspective.
- **3) Christ taught us to put on the new self (v24).**
  - ‘24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.’
  - We already are new people. We are given a new identity in Christ. Now we need to start acting like it. And since this new identity is one that God has created for us, it reflects his own righteousness and holiness. This is the new DNA he injects into us. Paul here tells us to start living in line with this new DNA.

- ***To sum up: When Christ calls us to salvation there are at least three insights he gives us at that time:***
  - 1) The old us is gone so some things need to go
  - 2) Let me change your way of seeing life and
  - 3) The new you is here is live like it.

Obviously, these insights will be perceived differently as people hear the Gospel, but Paul says that the normative insights that come to us at the time of salvation relate to a call to a new life (new ways of thinking and new ways of living).
- **We should make mention of ‘the new life’ when explaining the Gospel to people.**
  - My own belief is that when we preach the Gospel we need to include in the content of it something to the effect of, ‘God wants to make you a new person. He wants to change you for the better - he wants to change your way of seeing and your way of living. He wants to give you the gift of new life.’ These verses tell us that this is more-or-less what the Spirit wants to confirm in the heart of a person who hears and responds to the Gospel.
- **‘Peace with God’ and ‘The New Life’ serve as the twin-revelations in the heart of a person being saved.**
  - 2:17 and 4:20-24 taken together tell us that Christ preaches peace (2:17) and teaches new life (4:20-24) into the heart of a person when the Gospel is heard. These two things (peace and the new life) serve as the DNA of salvation that will then hopefully begin to shape their lives from that point.

#### **WORKING OUT THE DETAILS (4:25-32 and beyond)**

The Christian life begins with broad sweeping principles but in the end we have to get down to the details of how it impacts our lives. Paul starts with how our salvation begins ‘before the foundation of the world’ (1:4) and then ends up with us telling the truth. That is the way to make disciples: start them in the heights and then land them in the nitty-gritties of life.

- **The first basic motivation for godliness in the New Testament is that ‘the Spirit so leads’.**
  - The best way to understand these specific instructions is to think of them as ‘leadings of the Spirit in written form.’ Paul is not giving us new laws when he gives these instructions to us. They flow out of a living relationship with Christ. To try divorce the moral lifestyle advocated here from a life of insight into the Gospel and fellowship with Jesus is mere legalism. And legalism, at best, can make us look good, but it lacks the power to really change us in the core of our being. Galatians 5:16-25 develops this thought of how the Christian’s morality essentially is an attempt to walk in the Spirit.

- That is why Paul mentions ‘do not grieve the Holy Spirit’ (v30) right in the middle of his list of aspects of godliness.
- **The second basic motivation for godliness in the New Testament is that ‘it conforms to your new identity in Christ’.**
  - Notice the word ‘therefore’ in verse 25. It says that, ‘in light of how Jesus called you to think differently and be different when you were saved, do the following.’
- **A third basic motivation for godliness in the New Testament is ‘love’ -** which means that we choose to live in ways that do not hurt others, starting with our spiritual community.

The following verses (vs 4:25-5:4) give some practical ways we can allow the three motivations to impact the way we live:

- Motivation one: Live as the Spirit leads.
- Motivation two: Live compatibly with your new identity in Christ.
- Motivation three: Love others (and don’t hurt them or the church through wrongdoing).

25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbour, for we are all members of one body.

- **We should be honest and truthful.**
  - Paul is here giving us instructions for getting on with each other in the body of Christ - and he knows that dishonesty and lying will hurt the body.
  - Of course we must take our honesty and truthfulness into all of life - but Paul is saying that if it doesn’t start in the church it is unlikely to move from the church into the world.

26 "In your anger do not sin" [Psalm 4:4]: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold.

- **We should deal with anger in a godly way.**
  - This verse does not tell us that anger is wrong. Of course it is wrong when it is for the wrong reasons and when it is managed poorly, but we must remember that there really is a kind of anger that is righteous - think of Jesus’ righteous anger against the hardness of heart of the religious people of his day. Godly anger is not directed at people as much as to their sinfulness and at darkness in the world. If we do not, from time to time, get angry about this kind of thing it can mean that we are simply complacent.
  - But of course we must not be too quick to assume that our anger really is righteous anger. It seldom is, especially when we are

angry at people themselves, and especially when our will has been crossed and we are not getting what we want.

- ‘Do not let the sun go down on your anger’ = settle the matter, get calm, resolve the issue before the day ends.
  - This is interesting, because our usual approach to anger is to go to sleep angry and hope that it is gone in the morning (and then not to talk about it with the person). This effectively is an attempt to not let the sun rise on our anger. But the Spirit calls us to something far higher.
- ‘and do not give the devil a foothold’ = if we do not learn to manage destructive emotions such as anger (but certainly other ones like insecurity, jealousy, apathy etc) then we will give the devil an opportunity to get into our lives and mess things up.

28 Those who have been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

- **We shouldn’t what is not ours.**
  - ‘Those who have been stealing must steal no longer’.
  - This verse tells us that there really is such a thing as private property. It also goes beyond anything mentioned in the Mosaic law.
- **We should generate an income through fair means.**
  - ‘but must work, doing something useful with their own hands’
  - Christians need a high work ethic, and need to, as far as possible, pay their own way. It seems that many were, out of laziness, taking the short-cut of stealing or simply relying on other bread-winners.
  - Rather do ‘something’ than nothing when it comes to work.
- **We shouldn’t just work to pay our own way but also to help others.**
  - ‘that they may have something to share with those in need.’
  - The person started off in need (that’s why they stole) but God wants to make them become providers. God wants to turn us from takers into givers.
  - Notice that God, when he sets us up with some work and an income, he is not trying to increase our standard of living, but rather our standard of giving.

29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

- **It is best that we bite our tongue sometimes.**
  - ‘29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths’.

- This verse literally suggests that you have something unwholesome to say - but then you don't say it, rather you bite your tongue. We must make sure that our speech reflects the character of God and refuse words that are cutting, coarse, cynical, attacking, obscene etc.
- **We should be sensitive to what builds others up and what breaks them down.**
  - Before we can actually build someone up we need to be able to figure out what they need and what would benefit them. This requires sensitivity and awareness. We need to learn to really listen to people, and discerningly observe people so that we can see this.
  - We should want to see others built up in their faith and not limping because of unmet needs in their lives. We should not just want to boost their current emotional state (because deceptive flattery can do that) but to see what they need for their long-term benefit.
- **We mustn't underestimate the power of words to build someone up.**
  - Once we are more sensitive to what people need, we must be ready to speak the encouraging, edifying words that will build them up and benefit them. The church should be an army of encouragers!
  - The word 'benefit' can be translated as 'ministering grace' - we need to, through our words, minister God's grace that will build them up.
  - Notice that our words are either like poison (unwholesome) or like nutritional food (building others up). Our lives are greatly shaped by the words we hear - and in community we need to ensure a good diet of upbuilding words for everyone.

30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

- **It's best that we speak and act in ways that bring pleasure, not grief, to the Spirit.**
  - This verse relates specifically to words (since it immediately follows verse 29) but it certainly relates to the whole list of character traits to be encouraged / discouraged (in 4:25-5:4).
  - Galatians 5:25 tells us to keep in step with the Spirit. But what happens when we don't? The answer is that we grieve him - we bring sadness to him. And we will inevitably experience a loss of joy ourselves.
  - 'with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption' - this refers to our experience of being filled with the Spirit, which is usually marked by joy and peace. But, when we don't keep in step with him, we begin to experience diminished joy and peace.

Alternatively, if we do keep in step with the Spirit, our levels of joy and peace increase.

- This verse reminds us that the Spirit is very sensitive. That is perhaps why he is likened to a dove in Luke 3:22. Our fellowship with him is compromised through our failure to keep in step with him. We should make it our passion to fellowship the Spirit and bring him joy, and derivatively, experience his joy.

31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

- **We should repent of destructive styles of relating.**
  - Get rid of = this reminds us of 'put off the old self'. Notice that Paul does not tell us to pray about these things, nor to seek a deliverance ministry to set us free. Rather he insists we just do it - we firmly deal with these things in our hearts and lives.
  - Bitterness = unforgiveness, resentment, holding a grudge, replaying again and again in one's own mind how another hurt you, getting a sour spirit.
  - Rage and anger = losing one's temper.
  - Brawling = shouting.
  - Slander = saying bad things about.
  - Malice = longing for a person's ill-fortune.

32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

- **We should be kind, compassionate and merciful to each other.**
  - 'just as in Christ God forgave you' = this is a short form of the entire Gospel; the coming of Jesus was all about God showing us undeserved kindness, compassion and mercy! Out of our experience of his kindness, compassion, grace and mercy in Jesus we need to overflow to the people around us.
  - Be kind = be sincerely caring and tender toward
  - Be compassionate = learn to empathise with their pains
  - Be forgiving = without pretending as if they never hurt you, set them free from your judgment and no longer count their sin against you. All the great saints had to learn this: Joseph had to forgive his brothers, David had to forgive Saul, Job had to forgive his three friends and Jesus had to forgive Judas.
  - The very fact that we are told to forgive each other is an indirect way of saying, 'Even in the church you will be let down by each other' but that we must not be discouraged by that since the Gospel helps us to live in a fallen community too.

This section continues until Ephesians 5:4 (after all 4:25-5:4 is really a list of practical life changes that the Gospel brings about in our lives.)