

Ephesians 4:1-6

- The church and the one God and Father of all¹-

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Introduction and general information

- ❖ The context, form and structure, theological notes, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline below show some overlap with other sermon outlines taken from Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. This makes it possible to use this sermon outline as a "stand alone" and as part of a series.
 - It is possible to preach several sermons about Ephesians 4:1-6. See the application for two examples (summaries) and one elaborated outline.
- ❖ The City of Ephesus:²
 - The city was an important administrative and commercial hub of the Roman province of Asia. Nowadays the remnants of the magnificent city theatre can still be viewed. It had a seating capacity of 24,000 people (Acts 19:30-41). The temple of Artemis was famous and already classified in the ancient world as one of the seven wonders of the world. Numerous other gods and goddesses were worshiped.
- ❖ The City of Ephesus in the New Testament:
 - Paul visited Ephesus for the first time only briefly on his way to Jerusalem (Acts 18:18-22). After he had left the city, Priscilla and Aquila continued to preach the gospel (Acts 18:24-28).
 - Paul visited the city for a second time and stayed there for more than two years (Acts 19): **"This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the**

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² Arnold, C. (1993). Ephesus. In *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* (pp. 249-253). Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.

province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.” More churches were probably established during these years (Rev. 2-3) in the Roman province of Asia.

- Paul must have encountered severe conditions while he was in Ephesus. In his letter to the Corinthians he wrote: **“If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus** for merely human reasons, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die’” (1 Cor. 15:32). The majority of recent scholars postulate that Paul was in prison one or more times while he was in Ephesus.
- Paul met the Elders of the church on the beach of the city of Miletus (Acts 20:13-38) when he travelled to Jerusalem.
- Jews from Asia recognized Paul when he entered the temple in Jerusalem: **“Some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul at the temple.** They stirred up the whole crowd and seized him” (Acts 21:27; 24:19).
- Later, Paul sent Timothy to Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3) to support this church through teaching and instructions.
- Finally, the apostle John received his Revelation of Jesus Christ and sent it to the seven churches in Asia, the first being Ephesus (Rev. 1:11; 2:1-7). According to old church traditions, John probably stayed in Ephesus.

Context and overview of the letter to the Ephesians

- ❖ An overview of the letter to the Ephesians and the context of 4:1-6:

Salutation	1:1-2
Blessing or glorification of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit	1:3-14
First prayer and thanksgiving	1:15-23
Gentiles and Jews are both made alive in Christ – a new creation, a holy temple in the Lord	2:1-22
Admonition: don't be discouraged because of my sufferings (Paul)	3:1-13
Second prayer and glorification of God	3:14-22
Admonition: live a life worthy of the calling you have received: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live a life of love within the community of the church, which is the body of Christ • Live a life of love as a new creation in 	4:1-6:9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4:1-16 • 4:17-5:20

Christ, as children of God, filled with the Holy Spirit	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live a life of love, especially within the family-household 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5:21-6:9
The spiritual warfare	6:10-20
Greetings	6:21-24

Form and structure

- ❖ The following structure shows the urgency of this part of the letter.

	As a prisoner for the Lord, then,
<i>Urgent (1):</i>	I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.
<i>How?</i>	Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.
<i>Urgent (2):</i>	Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.
<i>Reason:</i>	There is
<i>The unity is based on the Trinitarian unity.</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called— 2. one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 3. one God and Father of all, <p>who is over all and through all and in all.</p>

Technical and theological and hermeneutical notes

- ❖ Textual notes:
 - The authorship and addressees of this letter have much been debated.³ Pauline authorship is affirmed by tradition and autobiographical information.

³ Arnold, C. (1993). Ephesians, Letter to. In *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* (pp. 240-242). Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.

❖ Theological notes:

- The letter to the Ephesians is essentially Trinitarian in character:
 - Ephesians 1:3-14. “Praise be **to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**.... Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised **Holy Spirit**, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.”
 - Ephesians 1:17: “I keep asking that **the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father**, may give you the **Spirit** of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.”
 - Ephesians 2:18: “For through **him** (Jesus Christ) we both have access to the **Father by one Spirit**.” (See also Eph. 2:22; 3:5.)
 - Ephesians 3:14-19: “For this reason I kneel before the **Father**,... I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through **his Spirit** in your inner being,¹⁷ so that **Christ** may dwell in your hearts through faith...”
 - Ephesians 4:4-6: “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.”
 - Paul begins his letter with an exclamation of praise to God (Eph. 1:3) and the mercies of God, especially his love: “But because of **his great love for us, God**, who is rich in mercy” (Eph. 2:4).
 - Christ is the exalted one (Eph. 1:21-22). He is the head of all creation (Eph. 1:10) and especially of his body the church (Eph. 4:15).
- Unity of the believers with Christ, the “saints in Ephesus, **the faithful in Christ Jesus**”:
 - The expression “in Christ” or “in him” occurs thirty-four times! There is a mystic corporate unity and solidarity of all believers in Christ, which is practised in the local congregation.
 - In him we have redemption, forgiveness of sin (Eph. 1:7). “In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan” of God (Eph. 1:11).
 - God “made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:5-6).

❖ Hermeneutical notes:

- Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesians, although both assertions have been contested by scholars (see above).

- For the exposition it is fruitful to refer to the implied author and the implied addressee. We can't meet Paul nor the Ephesians personally. There is distance with regard to place and time. But we can get to know them both through the contents of this letter. The author (Paul) tells some things about himself, personal information, style of writing, his concerns. The same is true for the Ephesians, but the information we receive is given by the implied author.
- The implied author makes himself known by:
 - Personal remarks, such as **“As a prisoner for the Lord,”** which tell something about his personal situation.
 - The use of personal pronouns, such as “I”, “my” and to a lesser extent “we”, because in this case he includes others as well.
 - His theological statements, acclamations and prayers, which are embedded in the larger Christian community.
- The implied audience is made known by the author of the letter:
 - When he writes about their local and sometimes personal circumstances.
 - When he uses specific personal pronouns, such as “you”, “we” – including himself, “they”, when he is writing about others.
 - When he uses imperatives and specific figures or style, such as hyperboles, understatements, irony.
 - **“I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received”** (verse 2) tells us something about Paul and about the Ephesians:
 - To Paul, it is important (**“I urge”**) to live a life worthy before God.
 - Paul is concerned about the conduct of the Ephesians (**“I urge you”**). These concerns are exemplified by verse 3: **“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”**
 - Because, by implication, (some) were not humble and gentle; (some) were not patient, not bearing with one another in love. And by doing so, breaking up the bond of peace (verse 4).

Exposition

Verse 1

❖ **“As a prisoner for the Lord, then,”**

- Paul was imprisoned. Where and when? Probably in Jerusalem, where Jews from Asia were involved in accusing him of defiling the holy place (Acts 21:27; 24:19).

- **“for the Lord.”** Paul was imprisoned because he is a faithful servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. His imprisonment is part of the plan of Christ.

Verse 2

- ❖ **“I urge you...”** His imprisonment urges him to write these words for three reasons:
 - What I am writing is really important!
 - I am concerned about your situation. There are problems which endanger the unity of the church, making the church vulnerable to internal strife. This endangers the advancement of the gospel in Asia.
 - This urgency is underscored in verse two and three: **“Be completely”**; **“Make every effort** to keep the unity of the Spirit.”
- ❖ **“to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.”**
 - Paul contrasts this life with the life of the Gentiles (4:17). In 4:17 a similar urgency is found.
 - In Eph. 4:20 he exclaims: **“You, however, did not come to know Christ that way.”** The calling he is writing about is summarized in 4:23-24: “to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”
 - You are a new creation (Eph. 2:10, 4:20-24).
 - You are in need of new attitude (Eph. 4:23; 5:17-19).
 - You need to be filled by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18).
 - This calling can be summarized as “to be in Christ.”
 - Paul uses the passive **“have received.”** It is a divine passive. You have been called by God himself. Paul preached the gospel to the Ephesians, but as a servant of God (Eph. 1:1).
- ❖ **“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”**
 - People differ from one another in character, in capabilities, in personal faith. Compare Romans 14:1-15:13: “May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God” (Rom. 15:5-7).

Verse 3

- ❖ **“Make every effort.”** It is not easily done.

- “σπουδάζω” = 1. **to proceed quickly, hurry, hasten** w. inf.; 3. **to be especially conscientious in discharging an obligation, be zealous/eager, take pains, make every effort, be conscientious** w. inf.⁴
- ❖ **“to keep the unity of the Spirit.”** This is the unity given by the Spirit in accepting one another, in forgiving one another (Eph. 4:31), in serving one another in love (Gal. 5:13; see also Gal. 5:22-23).
- ❖ **“through the bond of peace.”**
 - **“σύνδεσμος”** = 2. **that which brings various entities into a unified relationship, uniting bond.**⁵
 - Peace will hold people together. This peace is established by being humble, gentle, patient, bearing with one another in love (Eph. 4:2).

Verse 4-6

- ❖ Much can be said about each verse, each word. The first thing to note is the Trinitarian⁶ approach, which reveals the heavenly secret of the church and each believer > the (mystical) union with God.
- ❖ Note the sevenfold use of **“one.”** The number seven is often a number of completeness, as in this case. The unity of all believers is found in the complete oneness of God.
- ❖ **“One Spirit.”** He is the Spirit of wisdom and revelation (Eph. 1:17; 3:5), with whom we are sealed for the day of redemption (Eph. 1:13; 3:5).
 - **“There is one body.”** This is the body of Christ. The body is the physical presence of a person in this world. Christ makes himself manifest in this world in the body of the church (Eph. 4:13, 15-16), the local congregation and anywhere else where Christians meet each other in faith, hope and love, in one Spirit.
 - **“one hope.”** This is the hope of the restoration of all things and of our lives in particular: the new creation (Eph. 2:9-10; 4:20-24), the kingdom of God (Eph. 5:5).
 - **“calling.”** A summary of this call can be found in Ephesians 2:1-10.
- ❖ **“One Lord.”** There is only one Lord Jesus Christ:
 - “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:4-7).
 - **“One faith”** = that which is believed, *body of faith/belief/teaching.*⁷ This “one faith” differs from the personal faith. The “one faith” is the revealed faith, according to the

⁴ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 939).

⁵ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 966).

⁶ These verses have the character of an old Christian Trinitarian Credo (Bruce, F. (1984, p. 335).

⁷ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 820).

gospel. The personal faith is a gift from God which manifests itself in the acceptance of and reliance upon the revealed faith, through the holy Spirit.

- **“One baptism”** = the ceremonious use of water for the purpose of renewing or establishing a relationship w. God, *plunging, dipping, washing, water-rite, baptism*.⁸ Paul refers to the “one baptism” for the purpose of the relationship with God.
 - A discussion of the relation between the “one faith”, “a personal faith” and the “one baptism” is an interesting and important one. The present writer accepts the baptism of children of believers, because they are born within the community of believers, the community and body of Christ.

❖ **“one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”**

- **“One God and Father of all.”** God is our Creator (Rev. 4:11; Eph. 3:9, 14; Mt. 6:9 – the Lord’s Prayer!) and through accepting Christ as the one Lord, we have become his children (Jn. 1:12-13).
- **“who is over all.”** He is Lord and King, therefore the basis of all Christian conduct is worship (Rev. 4-5, especially Rev. 4:11). This letter contains blessing (Eph. 1:3-14), prayers (Eph. 1:17-19; 3:14-19), acclamations (Eph. 3:20-21) and songs (Eph. 4:8, 5:14).
- **“through all.”** The God and Father will make himself manifest in people, in their actions and words, just as his son Jesus did (Jn. 14:8-11; Eph. 5:1-2), who humbled himself and became a servant of his brothers and sisters (Jn 13:1-17; Phil 2:5-11).
- **“in all.”** The image of God will be restored – a new creation – the divine intimacy of which John wrote in his gospel (Jn 17:22-23):
“I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

Application

- ❖ One Spirit, One Lord, One God (Deut. 6:4). The church needs to be reminded of this fact.
- ❖ It is possible to preach several sermons on Ephesians 4:1-6 as a series, or the preacher can select one or two topics. Three examples are given below, but there are more! The first two are a summary, the last example is elaborated.
 - Example 1 - Ephesians 4:3:
 - **“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”**
 - This unity is founded upon and given by the Trinitarian Unity (verse 4-6).

⁸ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, 165).

- This unity will be established by the Spirit (verse 3), through one faith, one hope, one love (4-5, 5:1).
 - This means to be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love (verse 2).
 - According to the calling we were called (verse 1) > to follow Christ (Eph. 5:1-2; 4:20) in the Spirit (Eph. 5:18)
- Example 2 - Ephesians 4:5:
 - **“one Lord, one faith, one baptism.”**
 - There is only one Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour (1 Tim. 2:5) and whoever will call on his name will be saved (Acts 2:21). “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16) > one faith, one baptism.
 - This verse has far-reaching implications, not only for the local Christian community, but also for the divided church worldwide.
 - There is only one Lord Jesus Christ. This might sound obvious, but history and current world conditions show that Christians are divided in their answers on the question of who the Christ is. Paul affirms again: there is only one Lord, independent of our theologies.
 - He is the head of the body, governed by one Spirit (verse 4).
 - Through him we have access to the one God and Father (verse 6).
 - He is our peace (verse 3). This peace is vulnerable, therefore be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love (verse 2).
- Example 3 – Ephesians 4:6:
 - **“one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”**
 - The following is a detailed sermon outline.

❖ Ephesians 4:6:

- A visualisation of verse 6 is helpful to meditate upon these words of the apostle Paul.



- In preparing a sermon on this text, the preacher should take some time for meditation and prayer and ask himself how these words affect his mind, his life, his dependency, his faith, hope, and love.
- These words summarize the kingdom of God, the world of God, the new world of God (Jn. 17:23; 1 Jn. 3:24; Rev. 21:3), the mystic union with God.

❖ **“one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”**

- **“one God and Father of all”** – He is the Creator (Rev. 4:11; Eph. 3:9, 14; Mt. 6:9 – the Lord’s Prayer!).
 - How does this affect my mind and thoughts towards God? And towards my fellow Christians? How does He reveal himself as Father? He is **“compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love”** (Ps. 103:8).
 - I am his child through faith in Jesus Christ, a new creation (Eph. 2:9-10), and so are all other believers.
 - > **“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect”** (Mt. 5:48).
 - How does this change my mind towards the divisions in the church of today?
 - How does it affect evangelism when Christians present themselves as a divided people, obscuring the fact that there is only one God and Father of all?
- **“who is over all.”**
 - He is Lord and King, therefore the basis of all Christian conduct is worship (Rev. 4-5, especially Rev. 4:11). Worship guides our minds and thoughts in prayer, songs, hearing the word of God the Father, the Amen.

- How can I humble myself towards God and my brothers and sisters? What do I need to change? Worship teaches humbleness when people kneel down, close their eyes in prayer, lift up their hands, wash each other's feet (Jn. 13:13-15).
- **"through all"**
 - The God and Father will make himself manifest in people, in their actions and words, just as his son Jesus did (Jn. 14:8-11; Eph 5:1-2), who humbled himself and became a servant of his brothers and sisters (Jn. 13:1-17; Phil. 2:5-11).
 - How can we bear one another in love? God is bearing each one of us in love!
 - How can I become gentle and patient? God himself is gentle and patient!
 - Again, worship is important. In worship we are accepted by God and receive forgiveness of sins.
- **"in all"**
 - The image of God will be restored – a new creation – the divine intimacy of which John wrote in his gospel (Jn. 17:22-23; see above).
 - The Father will dwell in all of us, through his holy Spirit (Jn. 14:17, 21).
 - Then the bond of peace will be restored and strengthened (verse 3).

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