

A WALK WORTHY OF OUR CALLING

Ephesians 4:1-6

Intro: We come today to what is generally considered by Bible teachers to be the practical section of Paul's epistle to the church at Ephesus. It is characteristic of Paul that he would begin his letters to the churches with doctrine, or teaching. And then he would apply the teaching to the lives of the Christians to whom he was writing. There may be some practical exhortations in the first part, and there may be some teaching in the practical part, but generally the doctrine precedes the practical emphasis because Paul's teaching always formed the basis upon which his exhortations were founded.

The doctrine of Ephesians had to do, first, with the Gospel, and, secondly, a new work of God, not revealed in the OT, but revealed especially through the Apostle Paul, and having to do with both Jews and Gentiles, that God is calling those of His choosing to salvation through the Gospel and uniting them into one great spiritual body called the Church. Twice in those first three chapters we have prayers which Paul prayed primarily for those to whom he was writing, that they would be enabled by God to understand this amazing truth which had been a part of God's plan before time began.

The word that we have been using to describe the teaching of chapters 1, 2, and 3, is the word *wealth* – *the wealth of what we Christians have in Christ, the wealth of truth that we have for our lives here on earth, and the wealth which is ours for the future.*

Now the word that we have for the practical section which takes us from the first verse of chapter 4, to the ninth verse of chapter 6, is the verb, *walk*. Paul used it five times in this part of the epistle. Paul used it once in the doctrinal section of the epistle when he wrote in chapter 2, verse 2, speaking of our past lives. Look at Ephesians 2:2, and you will see these words: "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world." Just what does this word, *walk*, mean?

The Greek word which Paul used here is a verb describing action. Basically it means *the way a person lives*. Literally "the course of this world" can be translated, *the age of this world*. It speaks of the fact that before any of us were saved, we lived like all people in the world live, without God, without any thought of doing what was pleasing to God, but mainly we lived self-centered, sin dominated, lives. The idea seems to be that you can look at our world at any period of time you might choose, and you see people living for themselves, but not for God. That is because we were all born sinners, in bondage to our sin, and under the authority of "the prince of the power of the air," which is a Bible term for the Devil. This is descriptive of the age in which we live. The

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condition of the world has not change since man first sinned in the Garden of Eden. Our world is the same today. If there is any kind of a change it is that we have become more bold in our sins, and more determined to do away with anything that has to do with God or with Christ. And the more we turn away from God and His Word, the worse the chaotic conditions become in this world.

Now it used to be that we Christians lived like everyone else in the world lives. I don't mean to indicate that we are all equally bad, but I do mean that in God's sight we are bad, so bad that nothing but a sovereign act of Almighty God can change us, And, as Paul has explained in the first chapter of Ephesians, that change has taken place in our lives through the Gospel of Christ. There is no other remedy for sin, absolutely none.

The truth is that people live like they do because they are sinners by nature. But when a person is saved from his sin by the grace of God, it is inevitable that there will be a radical transformation in a person's life. I don't particularly like that word *radical*, but I looked it up in my dictionary and I found out that it has to do with reaching to the ultimate source of anything, and affecting the vital principle as a result. That it a fairly good description of the Gospel. It reaches into our hearts, changing us, and as a result our lives are changed. This is what Paul was talking about. We used to live one way before Christ saved us from our sin and from our sinning; now that we have been changed within, our outward lifestyle is also changed. Everybody walks. That is, we all have a lifestyle. Those who live according to the world's lifestyle live one way; those who have been saved from their sin are going to live another way, in the way which is pleasing to God. And how do we know what that way is? It is all laid out for us in the Bible. Even as Christians we can't live like God wants us to live if we are trying to do it in our own strength. But the Lord is our strength, and through Him we can please God.

Now if you are not a Christian, none of this is going to be of interest to you. But if you are a Christian, nothing will interest you more than this will. My computer tells me that the word "walk" is used more than three hundred times in the OT and the NT. It is a word we all need to pay attention to.

Therefore, this use of the word "walk" comes to us from the OT. The first time it appears is in Genesis 5:22 and 24 where we are told that "Enoch walked with God." The Bible does not say that God walked with Enoch, but that Enoch walked with God. If God had walked with Enoch, they would have walked the way that Enoch walked, but if Enoch walked with God, then it was God Who was determining how they would walk.

In Genesis 6:9 we are told that "Noah walked with God." That is what made Noah different from everybody in his generation. In Genesis 17:1 it is recorded that the Lord said to Abraham, "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect." To walk

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before God is to live as always in His presence. If a person is a true child of God, his lifestyle is going to be different from the way the people of the world live.

But we are going through this wonderful epistle of Paul to the Ephesians. Before we look at the first occurrence of this word in 4:1, I want to point out the other times it is used in this “walk” section. See Eph. 4:17; 5:2, 8, 15. As we go on in our study of Philipians and Colossians in our SS, we are going to come across this word again.

But now let us turn to our text for today: Ephesians 4:1-6.

Paul began this epistle by saying that he was “an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,” because he was writing to the saints in Ephesus on behalf of the Lord Jesus Christ. This would make the Ephesian Christians realized that what he had written to them was written with the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Therefore they were to listen very carefully, and pay the closest attention to what he had to say, not because it was just coming from him, *but it was coming from the Lord through him to them*. Now, midway through the epistle, and coming to the practical part of his letter, he addressed them in a very different way, a very loving way, with all of the tenderness of his heart: “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you.”

I take it from these words that it had been a very humbling experience for Paul to become a prisoner of Rome. But the fact that he spoke of himself as “the prisoner of the Lord,” means that he knew he was there by the will of God (the same reason he could call himself an apostle in Eph. 1:1), and that the Lord had a special purpose, or purposes, for his being *where he was*, and *what he was!* He had every right to command them, but instead he said, “I . . . beseech thee.” This reminds me of the way Paul wrote to Philemon about Onesimus. Listen to these word from Philemon, verses 8 through 10:

8 Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient,

9 Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

10 I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds:

Paul was pleading with Philemon for Onesimus, and here in Ephesians 4:1 Paul was pleading with the Ephesian believers to do what he was imploring them to do. Sometimes we accomplish more by a loving exhortation than we do with an outright command. Here in Ephesians 4:1 Paul’s words indicated to his readers how very important his message was to God, to himself, and for them.

What was his appeal to them? “That ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” As I was studying this verse, and came to this word, “called,” I

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looked back over the first three chapters to see if Paul had spoken to them of their calling. And I found that he had, in his first prayer in chapter 1, verse 18. The first of three requests that Paul prayed for them was, “that ye may know what is the hope of His calling.”

How was it that you and I were saved? God called us to salvation. In one of our memory verses for this week in 2 Thessalonians many of you will remember that Paul told the Thessalonians that God had “called you by our Gospel.” And if God had not specifically called each one of us to Himself, we never would have come. Now what is “the hope of His calling” us to be saved. “Hope” here means the ultimate purpose, or prospect. It is something which is absolutely certain, not something which may or may not happen. *We have been called by God to salvation because God intends to make us like our Lord Jesus Christ.* We all have this calling. But please tell me, how can we possibly “walk [live] worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called”? You and I would never have designed salvation like this even if it had been in our power to do so. But how can I walk to show myself worthy of such a salvation? How can you walk to show yourself worthy of such a calling – ultimately to be made like our blessed Lord?

Well, the Apostle Paul, speaking under the power and direction of the Spirit of God, tells us how we can show ourselves worthy. Listen to what Paul went on to say with his pen: “With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

How was the Apostle Paul saying that we could “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith” we have been “called”? It was by manifesting humility of heart.

What is “lowliness”? It is another word for humility. It is not so much that we make ourselves lowly, but that we recognize that is what we are, both because we are created by God and because we are sinners in His sight. Archbishop Trench says that it is to live in the knowledge that we are absolutely dependent upon God, that we have nothing to commend ourselves to God, but that all that we have and are that is pleasing to God, is what we have received from Him. Only by the grace of God can we live in such a way. The major obstacle that stands in the way of greater blessing from God, is our pride.

What about “meekness”? It follows “lowliness” because only a truly humble heart can be meek. It is first of all an attitude toward God in which we “accept His dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting” (Trench, p. 152). But it also is expressed in our relationships with people, even those who seek to do us harm, like David demonstrated in his attitude toward Shimei when David was fleeing from Jerusalem and his son Absalom. Shimei evidently wanted to kill David by throwing stones at him. Abishai wanted to go

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kill Shimei, but David said to him that the Lord had sent him to do what he was doing. David believed that even in such trials the Lord would use such actions for the chastening and purifying of his own soul. This is meekness.

The Lord used both of these words which He said, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matt. 11:29).

And then Paul added, “with longsuffering.” All of these characteristics are best to be found in our Lord, and what we can learn from Him. By nature we are “easily provoked.” Our patience runs thin under provocation from other, particularly when it is repeated. Bishop Moule says that a short temper and sudden outbursts of anger where we say things that we wish later we had never said, are evidences of sinful weakness.

Instead we are to be “forbearing” toward each other. We need to put up with the weaknesses and sinfulness of others remembering that we also have weaknesses and we make mistakes. If need be, Moule suggests that to show love for others there may be times when we need to take sides with others against ourselves.

In verse 3 we see what our objective always should be, “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. As Christians we by our own walk are to manifest toward God the effect of his saving work in the way we live. But we have been made members of the body of Christ, and so we have an equally important obligation toward God, and ultimately toward each other as well as to the world, the blessing of the fellowship that we enjoy with each other. But this is often where we experience the greatest failure. God has called us to Himself, to make us like the Savior. And His purpose for our brethren in the Lord, is the same as His purpose for us. We have difficulty being what we need to be in our relationship with the Lord. But we also have difficulties being what we need to be in our relationship with each other. In both of these areas, our knowledge of ourselves and our attitude toward ourselves, is basic to our fellowship with God and with each other. We are one in Christ. We need to endeavor by God’s grace to preserve the oneness. It will never be perfect here in this life, but like with our own sanctification, we need to be moving in that directions. All of our walk is to be characterized by love for God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, and also by love for each other in the Church, the body of Christ.

For our encouragement the Apostle Paul mentions the sevenfold oneness that those of us who know the Lord in this age have as the Lord’s people, and it is based upon the Three Members of the Godhead:

- 1) One body. The Church.
- 2) One Spirit. Indwelling, empowering, teaching.

- 3) One hope of our calling.
- 4) One Lord – Jesus Christ.
- 5) One faith. The Word.
- 6) One baptism. By the Spirit
- 7) One God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Concl: Thus, the Apostle has pointed out that from the prayer and benediction at the end of chapter 3, we have a life to live, we have a work to do, “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit,” and we have sufficient resources in the sevenfold foundation upon which our walk with God and our walk with each other can bring glory to God “in the church by Jesus Christ throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”