

Ephesians 4: 1-3; “Walk Worthy of Your Calling”, Message # 26 in a series entitled – “The Exceeding Greatness of His Power”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on July 14th, 2024, in the Morning Worship Service.

Paul begins this section of practical instruction on how to live the Christian life with reminding his readers that he was in prison. But by the way that he worded it here, though, he was showing them that they ought to think about God’s sovereignty in relation to it. He says – “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord.” It was not so much that he was being held by men, but he knew that he had been brought there by God Himself. And he was being retained there according to God’s will for him personally.

He knew that he was in prison was because of his preaching the gospel, and his being too free about it. He knew that in God’s having called him to be an apostle, that he had a solemn responsibility which was laid upon him. He says 1st Corinthians 9: 16 – “For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!” And so, as I begin this message, I want you to see what Paul would have you to see; that if you suffer for truth and righteousness, and for speaking the truth, it is that Christ Himself has called you to this.

If you are thrown into prison, you ought to see yourself as the prisoner of the Lord in this glorious sense that Paul is speaking of here; that He has led you into it. And you should realize that He will be with you all through it. Both our Lord, and Paul, would have you remember this. It is on this basis, then, that Paul beseeches the Ephesian believers, and us, to walk worthy of the calling with which we were called. There is a particular way that Paul would us do this. And he gives it to us in three couplets. Each one of these actions relates to the other in 3 couplets.

1st of all – You should walk with all lowliness and gentleness.

Now, you need to see that the attitude with which you walk spiritually, in living your life before God and before other Christians, is important. Your attitude is just as important as the actions that you take and the deeds that you do in relation to others in the body of Christ. Since Paul had to beseech and implore these believers at Ephesus to walk in lowliness, you need to see that it is something that all of us as Christians must learn. To have the right attitude does not come automatically when you become a Christian. But grace will lead you there.

Turn with me over to 1st Peter 5: 5-7 – “Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders.” “Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for God resists to proud, but give grace to the humble.” “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” Peter tells us that we have been called with a holy calling. We walk on the path of righteousness in the sight of the holy God.

In 1st Peter 1: 13-16 Peter says – “Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy for I am holy.’” To be holy is to be pure and separate from sin. Being holy leads you to the girding up of the loins of your mind.

It leads you to think about what it will be like to meet Jesus Christ face to face, and the great transformation that you will receive in being glorified at that time. But during your stay here upon the earth you need to humbly learn from God now. And in the process of your learning, you need to remember that He is perfectly holy. Therefore, it says here that you should not conform yourself to your former lusts, as you did in our ignorance.

A part of those lusts which you pursued before you were converted to Christ was your having a higher view of yourself that you ought to have had. You were a proud person. Perhaps you thought that you were really a pretty great person. Now that you have been saved, you know better. Or at least you should know better. Sometimes the temptation that will come to the Christian, is to think

this way – Since God is so great, therefore He would have me to be great. I want to take all that God has given to me and use it in His service. Well, that is good thinking. But a wrong conclusion can be drawn. And it is this – Because I have been given gifts, therefore I will compare myself with others.

And in doing so, the temptation that may come to you, is that you may think that you are better than other Christians. Or you may think that you are smarter or able to see things better than them. But you do not necessarily see that you need to walk with all humility and gentleness toward them. I am saying, that that attitude of lowliness, in relation to other Christians, is something that must be learned by looking at God Himself and Christ Himself. A holy person is a humble person. The New American Standard Bible puts it this way – “with all humility and gentleness”.

Let’s think about what we can learn from God first. God is holy and He is infinitely great in knowledge, and wisdom, and power. And yet it says of Him in Psalm 113, verses 4-9 – “The Lord is high above all nations, His glory above the heavens.” “Who is like the Lord our God, who dwells on high, who humbles Himself to behold the things that are in the heavens and in the earth?” “He raises the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the ash heap, that He may seat him with princes – with the princes of his people.”

Now, I want you to notice that even though God is so great, it says here that He humbles Himself to behold the things that are in the heavens and earth. In other words, He is able to perfectly consider people who are poor and needy in a perfect way. He considers them both spiritually and physically, and He considers carefully how He might, according to His eternal purpose, lift them up out of the ash heap and seat them with the princes of His people. In other words, He considers how He might show them His salvation.

We can learn from this. We ought to think this way. If God is so very great that He humbles Himself to consider us, creatures who are far below Him in greatness, then we ourselves ought to pray to do the same. We ought to do this with regard to all people who are around us. But especially those who are in our local assembly here. True greatness in a Christian is when they humble themselves, and have a lowly view of themselves, in relation to God first. And then this lowly view allows them to consider others around them more carefully.

God does not need to have a lowly view of Himself because He is perfect in all that He is and all that He does. But in His perfection, the word says that He humbles Himself to consider us, the creatures that He has made. He considers us, and the purpose that He has created us for. He considers what He will do for us and through us. In terms of His granting salvation and working in those that He has saved to become more holy and loving in their behavior towards others, He treats them gently at many points.

Listen to Psalm 18, verse 35 – “You have also given me the shield of Your salvation; Your right hand has held me up, Your gentleness has made me great.” Here we find that same principle, that God teaches us, His people, how to be gentle, by His showing gentleness to us. With all humility and gentleness, our text says. So I want you to understand that God is great beyond your greatest understanding of Him. And yet He is gentle. He is tender, and He is kind. Philippians chapter 4, verses 4 and 5 say – “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I will say, rejoice!” “Let your gentleness be known to all men.” “The Lord is at hand.”

Now, why do you think that Paul would say – Let your gentleness be known to all men? The word *επιεικῆς* (ep-ee-i-kes), and it can be translated graciousness or forbearance. The ESV translates it – Reasonableness. The King James – moderation. Why not say – Let your firmness be known to all men? Or, your determination be made known to all men? I believe that Paul worded it this way in order to show us that we can afford to be gentle with people, when we realize how gentle, and kind, and loving God has been to us.

When you show someone gentleness you are saying – I know what God has done for me by His grace. He has not dealt with me according to my sins, nor rewarded me according to my transgressions. He has been merciful and gracious toward me because of Christ. Therefore, I want to be gracious in my dealings with you. I will not be angry toward you, or cruel toward you, for God

is slow to anger. And He has been abounding in lovingkindness towards me. So meekness and gentleness is the opposite of harshness and severity.

Harshness and severity are used by people who will try to force other people to their conclusions. Or they will try to force them to do what they want them to do. If a Christian person is walking in this way, they are not glorifying God, or imitating Christ, in doing so. Christ says – I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your soul. The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, then gentle. This is how we ought to be with each other.

2nd – You should walk with longsuffering, bearing with one other Christians in love.

The words longsuffering and patience are pretty much synonymous here. The idea is that of your patiently bearing with other people in love. If you are patient, you will forebear. You will bear with people around you who you know need to change their ways. You will even bear with those who might speak against you or act toward you in a provoking way. Patience is waiting to do what you know will eventually need to be done, or should be done, because it is justice and righteousness that you want to see enacted or done.

You want to show kindness and love to people around you so that they see that you are bearing with their faults. 1st Peter 4: 7 and 8 – “But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.” “And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins.” Now, I hope that you can see that your love is willing to cover a multitude of sins committed by people around you because you are willing to wait to see whether that person will repent and change.

While you are being patient, you will be praying for them that they might learn to do what is right, or turn from their sins. This too, you learn from God. Turn with me over to 2nd Peter 3: 8 and 9. “But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

This is how God is with all of His elect people, most certainly. But it is also how He is towards many unbelieving people as well. For it is worded, that they “should” come to repentance. He is not willing that any should perish. That is His will of desire for all men. That is why He commands all men everywhere to repent. For someday He will judge the world in righteousness through the Man whom He has appointed, our Lord Jesus Christ. So God can, and He will, according to His infinite wisdom and purpose, in both justice and grace, be patient until He sees that a person will repent. Or, until it is proven sufficiently that they will not repent.

Your patience, then, as Christian man or woman ought therefore to consist in your bearing with people around you. You will be bearing with both Christians and unbelievers, where you can. And where you cannot, you will commit the matter to God, and to the church, if necessary, to resolve offenses given to you by other Christians. In the case of a Christian who has offended you, when you find that you cannot let your love cover a particular sin or sins, you need to go through the instructions given in Matthew 18: 15-17.

“Moreover if you brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.” “If he hears you, you have gained your brother.” “But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.” “And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church.” “But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.” (In other words – you treat them like an unbeliever)

But, it should be noted that this a process. It is a process of your being very patient and bearing with the offending person. You bear with them until you understand that they are blind to their own sin, or unwilling to repent. In living your Christian life in love, in order to have good relations and fellowship with people in the local church, much patience and much forbearance is needed.

3rd – You should walk endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

“Being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” says the New American Standard translation. “Eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit”, it says in the ESV. So each of us should walk as a Christian person who will keep, preserve, and maintain the unity of the Spirit. There is a unity which exists between Christ’s people, that the Spirit has established on account of Christ’s work in His life, death, and resurrection. Turn with me over to John chapter 17, verses 20-23.

Jesus is praying His High-Priestly prayer to the Father before He goes to the cross. And He says – “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.” “And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.”

The Lord Jesus is asking prayer of the Father for His being able to accomplish by His death, the breaking down of the barrier between Jew and Gentile, that they might be one people of God. But notice that what would be accomplished by Christ on the cross would be the establishment of a real indestructible spiritual union between all believers. He would accomplish this so that we might be one in the Spirit. That is, that we might be one in the same sense that the Father is in the Son, and the Son is in the Father, that we all might be one in them.

This is accomplished, humanly speaking, by the presence of the same indwelling Holy Spirit being given to every believer. That is what makes us one in the Father and the Son. The purpose of this wonderful spiritual unity would be, that the world might believe that the Father sent the Son. Now this is not just various Christian people trying to bring about unity in their views of truth, or promoting their denominational distinctives. Neither is it Christians suppressing the truth of doctrine in order to achieve an outward unity through an ecumenical movement.

This unity is all of God’s doing. As it says in 1st Corinthians 12: 13 – “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free – and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.” So, the instruction which we find here in Ephesians 4, verse 3, is that we are to endeavor to keep this unity of the Spirit. It is to keep what we already have by God’s doing. We are to preserve this unity and maintain it. That is, we are to preserve and maintain the unity that already exists.

So this keeping the unity of the Spirit is to be maintained by every Christian doing their part. They seek to treat all Christians with respect. They love them with the love of Christ. No matter what church affiliation they belong to, in the Universal Church at large in the world today, they seek to maintain this spiritual unity. And this keeping the unity of the Spirit is to be especially pursued in relation to the local church, of which you are a part, in particular. You are to do this in the bond of peace, it says.

In other words, because you know the Lord, you want to be a peacemaker in your local church. The Lord Jesus said in the Beatitudes – “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God.” You maintain unity by seeing to it that you yourself sow the fruit of righteousness in peace, and attempt to make peace where you can. You see this in James chapter 3, verses 13-18. “Who is wise and understanding among you?” “Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.” “But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.” “This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, and demonic.” “For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.” “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.” “Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”

So, since this is the case, let each of us endeavor to keep this spiritual unity which already exists among us, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in each of us, and in all of together. Let us be pure and peaceable and gentle, even as we are called to be. And let us pray to be able to build each other up in our most holy faith.

