

The Worthy Walk (Pt.1)
Ephesians 4:1-3
Dr. Steven R. Hereford, Pastor-Teacher

INTRODUCTION

We now come to the fourth chapter in our study of the book of Ephesians. Let me invite you to turn in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 4 as we look tonight at verses 1-3.

Paul has just completed three chapters of doctrine and now in chapters 4-6 he puts that doctrine to practice. In Jesus Christ we are righteous and holy, now we're to act like who we are by living in a manner that is worthy. Kenneth Wuest says, "This is the proper order, for only in doctrine can one see the sweet reasonableness of the exhortations, and obtain the necessary power and technique to obey them. In brief, God says in chapters 1-3, "I have made you a saint." In chapters 4-6, He says, "Now, live a saintly life."

That is the purpose of the "therefore" in verse 1—"in view of all that God has done for the believer, which we have seen in the first three chapters of this epistle" (J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible*), "walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called."

Paul begins verse 1 with an *exhortation to the worthy walk*.

I. The Exhortation to the Worthy Walk (v.1)

Paul says, "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called."

Paul begins chapter 4 with talking first about:

A. The Prisoner (v.1a)

1. This is the second time he mentions his imprisonment (See 3:1)
2. In mentioning his imprisonment he is reminding his readers “that he knows the worthy Christian walk can be costly and that he has paid considerable cost himself because of his obedience to the Lord” (John MacArthur, Ephesians, 117).
3. When he wrote to Timothy in 2 Tim.1:8 he told him “not to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me its *prisoner*; but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God.”
4. Later in chapter 3, he said that “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (v.12).
5. Paul understood the cost associated with living for Christ

In 2 Cor.11:24-28 he describes to the Corinthians how he suffered for the gospel when he said, “Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. 26 I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; 27 I have been

in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. 28 Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches.”

6. He says he is a “prisoner of the Lord.” It should be “prisoner *in* the Lord” (ἐν Κυρίῳ)

“He was a prisoner because he was in the Lord and for his sake. It was as a Christian and in the cause of Christ he suffered bonds” (Charles Hodge, Commentary on Ephesians).

J. Vernon McGee asks, “Isn't it interesting that Paul can be seated in the heavenlies in Christ and can also be seated in a prison because he was a witness for Christ to the Gentiles?”

The same is true for all of God’s children when undergoing persecution or trials.

B. The Plea (v.1b)

Paul continues in verse 1 by saying, “Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you.”

1. Paul is pleading with the Ephesians
The word “implore” is the Greek word *parakaleo* which means “to call to one’s side” (MacArthur), “to exhort” or “encourage” (Fritz Rienecker, *The Linguistic Key to the Greek NT*, 530).

It carries the “idea of wanting to help or be helped” (MacArthur). It is “used of every kind of calling to a person which is meant to produce a

particular effect” (WE Vine, Vine’s Expository Dictionary, 112).

- a) Paul used this word in Romans 12:1 when he urged the believers at Rome to “present [their] bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God.”
- b) He used it when he wrote to the Corinthians urging them to unity in 1:10:

“Now I *exhort* you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.”

- c) Each time he used this word, he was exhorting them to a proper behavior—a behavior not apart from knowledge but because of knowledge.

John MacArthur says, “Paul was not giving suggestions to the Ephesians but divine standards, standards apart from which they could not live in a way that fittingly corresponded to their being children of God. Paul never exhorted on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. He could not rest until all those given into his spiritual care walked in a manner worthy of the calling with which they had been called” (Ephesians).

He was saying to the Ephesians:

“Because you have been ‘blessed with every

spiritual blessing' (1:3), 'chosen in Him before the foundation of the world' (1:4), 'predestined to adoption as sons' (1:5), given 'redemption' and the 'forgiveness of sins' (1:7), given the understanding of 'His will' (1:9), 'an inheritance' (1:11), given the Holy Spirit (1:13), made alive by God (2:4-5) and 'brought near by the blood of Christ' (2:13), live in a manner befitting your calling."

2. Paul is pleading for proper conduct

The word "walk" (peripateo, aor.act.inf.) means "to conduct one's life" (Rienecker), "to order one's behavior" (Wuest).

It is used this way throughout the NT:

- a) Paul uses this word again in verse 17
- b) He also uses it in 5:2
- c) He described the believers at Rome in Romans 8:4 as those "who do not **walk** according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."
- d) In Romans 13:13 he told them, "Let us **walk** properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy" (NKJV) [The NASB has "behave"]
- e) He told the Thessalonians in 1 Thess.4:1, "Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received

from us instruction as to how you ought to **walk** and please God (just as you actually do **walk**), that you excel still more.”

- f) The apostle John said in 1 John 2:6, “The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to **walk** in the same manner as He walked.”

This is “the theme of the last three chapters of Ephesians. In the first sixteen verses of chapter 4, Paul emphasizes the unity and in the rest of the chapter the uniqueness of the Christian walk. In chapters 5 and 6 he stresses the moral purity, the wisdom, the Spirit control, and the warfare of the Christian walk” (MacArthur, Ephesians, 119).

3. Paul pleads for proper conduct that corresponds with their calling

He says, “I plead with you to live or conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called.”

The word he uses for “worthy” (*axios*) “has the root meaning of balancing the scales—what is on one side of the scale should be equal in weight to what is on the other side.

By extension, the word came to be applied to anything that was expected to correspond to something else.

A person worthy of his pay was one whose day’s work corresponded to his day’s wages.

The believer who walks in a manner worthy of the

calling with which he has been called is one whose daily living corresponds to his high position as a child of God and fellow heir with Jesus Christ. His practical living matches his spiritual position” (MacArthur, Ephesians, 119).

- a) Paul used this same language when addressing the Colossians in Col.1:9-10

He said, “For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so that you will **walk in a manner worthy of the Lord**, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”

- b) We also hear this language when addressing the Thessalonians in 1 Thess.2:11-12

He says, “just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, 12 so that you would **walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.**”

- 4. Paul is pleading for proper conduct that matches the high calling of salvation

The word “calling” (klesis) “refers to that divine summons into salvation which God gives a sinner.” It is “that effectual call into salvation which God in sovereign grace extends to a sinner”

(Kenneth Wuest, Wuest Word Studies in the Greek NT).

So, “The calling with which you have been called” “is the sovereign, saving calling of God” (MacArthur).

- a) Jesus said in John 6:44, “No one can come to Me *unless the Father who sent Me draws him*; and I will raise him up on the last day.”
- b) Paul said in Romans 8:30 that those whom God “predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.”
- c) Jesus told His disciples in John 15:16, “*You did not choose Me but I chose you*, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.”

Paul gives in verses 2-3:

II. The Elements of the Worthy Walk (vv.2-3)

He tells the Ephesians that walking “in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called” is to walk “with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

The first element he gives of the worthy walk is:

- A. Humility (v.2a)

This word (tapoeinophrosune) means, “to think or judge with lowliness” (MacArthur). It is “lowly thinking” (Rienecker) or a “lowliness of mind” (Vine). Practically speaking, it is “putting Christ first, others second, and self last” (Warren Wiersbe, The Bible Exposition Commentary).

“Humility was despised in the ancient Greco-Roman world as a slave-like quality. What was admired was the mega-souled or "great-souled" man who was complete and self-sufficient” (Kent Hughes, Ephesians).

John Wesley said that “neither the Romans or the Greeks had a word for humility. The very concept was so foreign and abhorrent to their way of thinking that they had no term to describe it.”

It is a beautiful word in the NT:

1. It is the key to unity in the fellowship
 - a) Paul speaks of unity in verses 3-6 “where humility is the first step” (Calvin)
 - b) Paul told the Philippians in 2:2-8, “make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. 3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with *humility* of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in

the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

- c) Peter said in 1 Peter 5:5, “You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with **humility** toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

- 2. It is a virtue that we are commanded to put on

Paul said to the Colossians in 3:12, “As those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, **put on** a heart of compassion, kindness, **humility**, gentleness and patience.”

- 3. It is the means by which we receive the Word

James said in 1:21, “Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.”

B. Gentleness (v.2b)

Humility always produces gentleness, or meekness. Meekness is one of the surest signs of true humility.

- 1. Gentleness or meekness is “power under control”

Praotes which is also translated “meek”

(Rienecker) refers “to that which is mild-spirited and self-controlled, the opposite of vindictiveness and vengeance” (MacArthur, Ephesians, 124).

This word was “used of wild animals that were tamed, especially of horses that were broken and trained. Such an animal still has his strength and spirit, but its will is under the control of its master” (MacArthur, 125).

2. Paul uses this word to describe Jesus in 2 Cor.10:1

He says, “Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the **meekness** (praotes) and gentleness of Christ.”

3. This is also the word Jesus used to describe Himself in Matthew 11:28-30

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am **gentle** and humble in heart, and You will find rest for your souls.”

4. All believers are to be meek or gentle
 - a) This is to be your overall attitude according to Colossians 3:12: “So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, **gentleness** and patience.”
 - b) This is to be your pursuit according to 1 Timothy 6:11: “Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and

gentleness.”

- c) This is the fruit of the Spirit according to Galatians 5:22
- d) This is the attitude you are to have when confronting a falling brother or sister according to Galatians 6:1: “Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of ***gentleness***; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.”

C. Patience (v.2c)

This is the Greek word makrothumia. It could be translated “long-tempered” (MacArthur). It is often translated “longsuffering.”

“The patient person endures negative circumstances and never gives in to them” (MacArthur, Ephesians, 126).

- 1. This too is the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22
- 2. All believers are to put this virtue on in their lives (Col.3:12)
- 3. Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:2 that this was to characterize Timothy when he preached the word. He was to “be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great ***patience*** and instruction.”
- 4. Paul modeled this virtue and Timothy followed it as well

2 Timothy 3:10-11 says, “ Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, *patience*, love, perseverance, 11 persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me!”

D. Forbearing Love (v.2)

This part of the verse was originally translated “showing forbearance to one another in love” in the NASB but in the update is now reads, “showing tolerance for one another in love.”

It is the word *anecho*, which means, “to bear, to bear up, to hold one’s self up” (Rienecker) or “to hold up” (Vine).

The type of bearing up Paul is referring to is that which is accompanied with unconditional love.

John MacArthur says, “Forbearing love could only be agape love, because only agape love gives continuously and unconditionally. Eros love is essentially self-love, because it cares for others only because of what it can get from them. It is the love that takes and never gives. Philia love is primarily reciprocal love, love that gives as long as it receives. But agape love is unqualified and unselfish love, love that willingly gives whether it receives in return or not. It is unconquerable benevolence, invincible goodness-love that goes out even to enemies and prays for its persecutors (Matt. 5:43-44). That is why the forbearance of which Paul speaks here could only be expressed in agape love” (Ephesians, 127).

1. We are called to “speak the truth in love” (Eph.4:15)
2. We are to “walk in love” (Eph.5:2)
3. We are to “abound in love”
 - a) Paul said to the Philippians in 1:9, “And this I pray, **that your love may abound still more** and more in real knowledge and all discernment.”
 - b) He told the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10, “Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to **love** one another; 10 for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. **But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more.**”
4. We are to be like-minded in love

Philippians 2:2 says, “Make my joy complete by being of the same mind, **maintaining the same love**, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.”
5. This too is to be the pursuit of every believer
 - a) 2 Tim.2:22 says, “Now flee from youthful lusts and **pursue** righteousness, faith, **love** and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.”
 - b) Romans 12:9-17

E. Unity (v.3)

“Being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

1. We are to be diligent to preserve unity in the fellowship
 - a) The word “diligent” (spoudazo, pres.act.part.) that Paul uses means, “to make haste” (MacArthur), “to be eager, to make every effort” (Rienecker). “It speaks of a determined effort” (Wuest).

This is “a holy zeal that demands full dedication” (MacArthur).

- b) The word “preserve” (terein, pres.act.inf.) means “to guard, keep, maintain” (Rienecker)
 - c) The word “unity” (henotes) “is speaking of the inner universal unity of the Spirit by which every true believer is bound to every other true believer” (MacArthur).

John MacArthur says this unity “is the unity of the Spirit working in the lives of believers. It does not come from the outside but the inside, and is manifested through the inner qualities of humility, gentleness, patience, and forbearing love.”

- (1) Paul called for this “unity of the Spirit” to exist among the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 1:10 when he wrote:

“ Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.”

- (2) He also called for this to be in Euodia and Syntyche in the church at Philippi

He said in Philippians 4:2, “I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord.”

2. We are to preserve unity in the bond of peace

The word “bond” (sundesmos) “denotes that which keeps something together” (Rienecker).

“The bond that preserves unity is peace” (MacArthur).

In order to have unity there must be peace. To have outward peace there must be inward peace—the unity of the Spirit that exist among all believers through the Holy Spirit.

- a) Paul said in Romans 12:18, “If possible, so far as depends on you, be at *peace* with all men.”
- b) He said in 14:19, “So then let us pursue the things which make for *peace* and the building up of one another.”
- c) He told the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians

13:11 to “live in peace; and the God of peace shall be with you.”

- d) “Peace” is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal.5:22) and it is to be pursued (Heb.12:14)

So, Paul is calling for all believers to be quick to guard and maintain that unity which comes from within and manifests itself in humility, gentleness, patience, and forbearing love.”

CONCLUSION

1. This is his exhortation or plea and it is the features that make for a worthy walk.
2. Doctrine always determines practice.
3. If you have right doctrine, you will have right living but it must be pursued.
4. You can sit under right doctrine all day long but it will do you no good unless you live it!
5. Are you living your life in a “manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called” (v.1)?
6. Are you humble, gentle, long-tempered, forbearing in love, and preserving the unity of the Spirit?
7. This is the application of Paul’s prayer in 3:14-21 that we looked at last time.
8. This is how “to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man” (3:16).

9. It takes work!
10. If what we have talked about tonight does not describe you, then you may either still be “dead in trespasses and sins” (2:1) or carnal.
11. If you’re carnal, then your life is characterized by the opposing virtues, like pride, strife, impatience, intolerance and disunity.
12. The only remedy is to confess and repent.
13. I want to call you to that right now as we pray.
14. Let’s pray.

—