

Walk Worthy – Eph 4:1-3

Eph 4:1-3. We're at the halfway point of Ephesians, and it marks a shift. Up to this point Paul has focused on doctrine, truths about God and us that he wants us to know. Whereas now he turns his attention to application. What we should do and how we should *live* in light of those truths. It's a shift.

Indicated by the way he writes. In the first three chapters, he used one imperative, one command – *remember*. (2:11). But in ch4-6, we find 39 commands. So there's a shift. And the first command, is *walk*. Take a look. V1.

I therefore [Paul says], a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, [2] with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, [3] eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (ESV)

Walk. That's the command. And do so in a worthy *manner*. Walk worthy. That's the point.

➤ And just to make sure we receive it and accept it, Paul reminds us of his authority to even *say* such a thing. To *urge* us at all. By saying that he's *a prisoner for the Lord*. Which is a play on words, because he was writing from a prison in Rome. 62AD.

But instead of saying, "I'm a prisoner of Caesar," he says, I'm *a prisoner for the Lord. For the Lord*. Meaning that he's constrained to do *his* bidding. He's speaking on *his* behalf. So that what he says, comes with the Lord's *authority*. He's not a prisoner serving his *own* interests, or the interests of Caesar, but God's. And therefore, what he says carries God's weight. That we should *walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which [we] have been called*. (1)

Which means first of all:

1. Live up to your calling as a child of God. (v1)

Live, because that's what *walk means*. It's a metaphor Paul uses, to say "conduct your life." Or "live your life." But not just any old way. He urges us to walk in a *worthy* way. A manner worthy of our calling.

Which refers to our inclusion in God's family, for God's purposes. That's our calling. It's our *adoption* as one of God's children. Our transfer from the *domain of darkness* . . . to the *kingdom of light* (Col 1:13). Our resurrection from death to life.

And when Paul says to walk in a manner *worthy* of that, he's saying live *up* to it. Conduct yourself in a way that's equal to your position, your status. A way that brings fame to him instead of shame. A way that's equal to the spiritual *blessings* you have in Christ.

You might think of it like an athlete who gets recruited by a top tier school with a long history of excellence, tradition, and pride. One of the first things that young man or woman is told, is that they're a part of something bigger than themselves. And they are expected to *represent* the school in a way that makes it shine. Conduct themselves in a way that brings fame to the program instead of shame. They're expected to live up to their calling, their opportunity.

How much more our calling as children of *God*? Members of his kingdom. His people. The very thing Paul just spent 3 chapters covering.

➤ So I went back and did a quick survey. To remind myself of what he said. And I was overwhelmed. Finding no less than 42 **Characteristics Of Our Calling**. 42.

From chapter 1:2 I found that we are **consecrated**. That's the idea of being *saints*. And from v4, that we are **chosen**. And **holy** (1:4). And **blameless** (4), **predestined** (5), **adopted** (5), **blessed** (6), **redeemed** (7), **forgiven** (7), **lavished** (8), **informed** (9), **united** (10), **bequeathed** (11), **sealed** (13), **guaranteed** (14), **enlightened** (18), **enriched** (18), **empowered** (19), **filled** (23), **loved** (2:4), **made alive** (5), **saved** (5), **raised** (6), **seated** (6), **promised** (7), **graced** (8), **gifted** (9), **created** (10), **purposed** (10), **brought near** (13), **united** (13), **made new** (15), **reconciled** (16), **welcomed** (18), **included** (19), **joined** (21), **indwelt** (22), **emboldened** (3:12), **exalted** (13), **strengthened** (16), **established** (17), and **loved** once again (19).

42 characteristics of our calling. Driving home the point, that when Paul says I *urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called*, he's saying live up to the many characteristics of your salvation. The characteristics of who you *are* in Christ, and the blessings that come with it. Walk worthy.*****

And do so, with all humility.

2. Stay humble (v2a)

After Paul says to walk worthy, he lays out 5 ways to do so. Not that these are the *only* ways to conduct yourself in a manner that honors God's call on your life, but that Paul sees them as especially crucial, given our tendencies. Like our tendency toward pride.

So he says walk worthy, v2, *with all humility*. Not just some humility. Or humility sometimes. But *all* humility *all* the time.

Why? Why is that an issue? Two reasons.

First of all, humility was *despised* in first century Roman culture. They associated it with slaves. "So it can't be a virtue" they said. Instead, they admired self-assurance and self-sufficiency. Sound familiar? Pride was not only an issue then, but still is.

➤ Second, he highlights humility because knowledge tends to make us arrogant. It puffs up the Bible says. (1 Cor 8:1) Like the professor I had in college who was a well-known author and sought after speaker. He knew a lot about a lot, and knew it. And wanted us to know it. And if he was ever challenged on something, look out. His knowledge had puffed him up, and he was arrogant.

And if *we're* not careful, our knowledge will puff *us* up. Our knowledge about the truths of Scripture. And salvation. And God himself. Not to mention the privilege of knowing the Truth *himself*. Jesus.

Pride was an issue because humility was despised, and we're not immune.

So whatever you do, don't go there. Because you can't walk worthy and be arrogant.

3. Be **gentle** (v2a)

Walk worthy Paul says, *with all humility and gentleness*. Tenderness. As in, conduct your life in such a way that you treat people kindly. And respond mildly. And convey a soft answer instead of a harsh one. Be gentle.

Which for some people, is easy. They come by it naturally. They're soft of heart, soft in demeanor, and soft in speech.

But most of us have to work at it. And be very intentional about it. Because it *doesn't* come naturally. Most of us tend toward harshness. Especially when our frustrations or familiarity are high. Those are the danger zones. Frustration and familiarity.

➤ Like when you're dealing with someone who has sinned, and they're not responding. They're not soft of heart. Inevitably, frustration mounts, and gentleness tends to go out the door. Meanwhile, **Gal 6:1** says:

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.

Not that a strong rebuke is out of the *question* when confronting someone in sin. Especially when there's a hard heart. Jesus *himself* spoke strongly at times.

But that's rarely the place to start. And even then, even in frustration, gentleness should reign. Because it's part of living up to your calling as a child of God; an ambassador for Christ.*****

➤ The other danger zone is familiarity. The more familiar you are with somebody, the more intentional you have to be with gentleness.

Think parents and kids. I struggled with gentleness big time with our girls. Like when they climbed out on the roof of our house one time, from one of their bedroom windows, and broke the screen. And risked injury or death in the process. Hello. I was pretty frustrated. And gentleness was a struggle. Especially so because I'm very *familiar* with them.

Be careful of that. Be careful of frustration and familiarity. Especially when they're combined. They tend to push gentleness aside, and make your walk *un-worthy*.

4. Have **patience** (2vb)

If we're going to live up to our calling as children of God, we need patience. And while there are lots of areas of our walk where this applies, I want to focus on our patience with God himself. Because we tend to get *impatient* with him. And when we do, we don't walk worthy. He didn't call us to worry, fret, and complain about his work, his way, and his timing. He didn't.

Have patience **with God's work**. His work of ministry. His work in the lives of your loved ones. His work in this world. He knows best, and has a plan. And to the extent that "you know better," you walk in a manner *unworthy* of your calling.

And have patience **with God's timing**. Even harder sometimes. God's work and God's way may not be a problem for you, but God's *timing* probably is.

"When are you going to give me victory, Lord? Over this addiction. This situation. This obstacle. When are you going to restore my marriage? Or give me a spouse in the first place? When are you going to save my husband? My wife. My kids. My parents. When are you going to open new doors? Or give me a promotion."

Patience with God's timing is hard. And when you combine it with his work and way, it seems unbearable at times. But it's paramount to walking worthy.

Ps 37:7-9 combines a lot of this by saying:

[7] Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! [8] Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil. [9] For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land [a key aspect of God's promise in that age].

If you're going to walk worthy of God's calling, and receive his promises in *this* age, you have to have patience. Patience with his work, and patience with his timing.

5. Show **grace** (v2c)

Walk worthy, Paul says, *bearing with one another in love*. V2. It's related to patience certainly, but goes further. To bear with each other in love is to show grace to one another, because we love each other. Show latitude, because we care. Show mercy, because you've been there.

Like when someone close to you falls into sin. If there's any remorse or repentance at all, show grace.

Or how about when someone in your life is slower than you? Slower to grow. Slower to learn. Slower to mature. Or maybe they just disagree with you. Maybe they have bigger obstacles to overcome. Show grace. Bear with.

And certainly show grace to those who are weak. Like people who are just *starting* their walk. They need people to show them grace; people to bear with them.

Do *babies* walk right away? No. Do they stumble all the time? Yes. Are they experiencing things for the first time? Totally. And where would they be without someone showing them grace upon grace?

We need that. All of us. We need others to bear with *us* in love, and they need us to bear with them in love. Show grace, and walk worthy.

And then last . . .

6. **Stick together** (v3)

V3. Walk worthy, Paul says, *eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*. We *are* together, and we ought to *stick* together. We *have* unity, by virtue of the Spirit's work, and we ought to maintain it. Preserve it. Protect it. That's the idea.

It's a reference to **chapter 2** where Paul first *introduces* this concept. And I want you to see it. I want you to see that Paul's statement in 4:3, is a summary of **2:13-22**.

[13] But now [as opposed to when you were separated from Christ and each other] in

Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ [we've been united by his sacrifice].

[14] For he himself is our peace [our bond, as Paul says it in 4:3], who has made us both one [united us] and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility [15] by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances [the Old Testament Law], that he might create in himself one new man [one] in place of the two [once again, uniting us], so making peace. [16] and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

[17] And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. [18] For through him [through Jesus; the embodiment of peace] we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

[19] So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens [united; again] with the saints and members of the household of God, [20] built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, [21] in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. [22] In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Nearness, oneness, unity, peace, togetherness, and the Spirit. Maintain *that*, Paul says. *The unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*. The unity we have, by virtue of the peace Jesus secured, applied by the Spirit, in and among us. We don't have to manufacture it or somehow create it, we just have to protect it and preserve it. We just have to stick together.

➤ And do so eagerly. Be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit it says (4:3). Not grudgingly or hesitantly, but zealously. Passionately. Diligently.

We ought to fight to preserve the unity of our *spiritual* family, just like we fight to preserve the unity of our *immediate* family. We should. Bearing with each another *here*, just like you strive to do at home. Showing grace to your brothers and sisters in *Christ*, like you do with your brothers and sisters in name. Exercising patience in *ministry*, like you exercise it in life. Fight for that. Stick together.

And not just in proximity, but heart; and soul. Stick together here (heart). Not just in lip service, but buy-in. Not just "I go to that church," but "I *belong* to that church."

Instead of treating church like an elevator, where you get in, face forward, and never talk to anyone; treat it like a Thanksgiving table. Where you love each other and belong together.

➤ And do all that *in the bond of peace*. The bond we have in Christ. It's the tie that binds in the first place, and the goal for every place. Far from maintaining unity by force – like a boarding school does, or an army of drafted soldiers – we ought to preserve our unity by cultivating peace. Fostering harmony. Removing hostility. Forgiving offenses. Pursuing friendships. **(Summary)**

Then and only then will we be eager to preserve the unity God has so graciously given us.

Then and only then will we fight for it, and stick together. Then and only then will we walk worthy.

Prayer – Lord, that's our desire. We want to live up to your calling on our life. So help us, we pray. Help us to stay humble, be gentle, have patience, show grace, and stick together. Thank you for the unity we enjoy; and give us more. Bless the tie that binds; and strengthen it.