

# The Worthy Walk

## Ephesians 4:1-6

Reporters and city officials gathered at a Chicago railroad station one afternoon in 1953. The person they were meeting was the 1952 Nobel Peace Prize winner. A few minutes after the train came to a stop, a giant of a man - six feet four inches with bushy hair and a large mustache stepped from the train. Cameras flashed. City officials approached him with hands outstretched. Various people began telling him how honored they were to meet him.

The man politely thanked them and then, looking over their heads, asked if he could be excused for a moment. He quickly walked through the crowd until he reached the side of an elderly black woman who was struggling with two large suitcases. He picked up the bags and with a smile, escorted the woman to a bus. After helping her aboard, he wished her a safe journey. As he returned to the greeting party he apologized, "Sorry to have kept you waiting."

The man was Dr. Albert Schweitzer, the famous missionary doctor who had spent his life helping the poor in Africa. In response to Schweitzer's action, one member of the reception committee said with great admiration to the reporter standing next to him, "That's the first time I ever saw a sermon walking."

Today I want to speak to you about walking the walk. Chapter 4 turns a corner in Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Paul begins to urge us to walk our talk. He implores us to live what we believe.

Do we really believe all that has been taught in the first half of the book of Ephesians? Do we believe that we have been **"blessed... with every spiritual blessing?"** Do we believe that we were **"chosen"** and **"predestined... to adoption?"** Do we believe that we have **"redemption through His blood and the forgiveness of sins?"** Do we believe that in Him **"we have obtained an inheritance?"** Do we believe that we have been **"sealed with the Holy Spirit?"** Do we really believe that we were once **"dead in trespasses"** and now have been **"made alive?"** Do we believe that **"we are His workmanship [masterpieces] created in Christ Jesus for good works?"** Do we believe that we are **"fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God?"** Do we believe that we **"are being built together for a dwelling place of God?"** Do we really believe that God is **"able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us?"** Let me ask again, "Are we a big-God church or a little-god church?" As Paul makes this transition into the second half of the book, he in effect is saying, "If you are a big-God church, then show it! Walk worthy of your calling."

The word **"therefore"** in v.1 refers back to the entirety of chapters 1-3. This is the half-way point of this letter. In the first half, we learned who we are in Christ. In the second half, we will learn how we then should live. We are moving from principles to practice, from exhortation to application, from doctrine to duty. The theological realities of chapters 1-3 are the practical realities of chapters 4-6.

What does it mean to **"walk worthy?"** **"Walk"** here refers to our daily lifestyle, the way we live our lives on a day to day basis. The word "walk" is going to be repeated a number of times in chapters 4-6. We'll later read that we are to **"walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind"** (4:17), but instead we **"walk in love"** (5:2), **"walk as children of light"** (5:8), and **"walk circumspectly"** (5:15). Christians ought to **"walk"** or live differently from non-Christians. J Vernon McGee explains that,

*"Walking is not a balloon ascension. A great many people think the Christian life is some great, overwhelming experience and you take off like a rocket going out into space. That's not where you live the Christian life. Rather, it is in your home, in your office, in the schoolroom, on the street. The way you get around in this life is to walk. You are to walk in Christ." D. L. Moody once said, "Every Bible should be bound in shoe-leather."*

**"Worthy"** comes from the Greek word *axios* that referred to a set of balancing scales. The weight of one side must equal the weight of the other side. Put all that Jesus has done for you one side of the scales. Put how you live for Him on the other side. Does it balance? This is what it means to **"walk worthy."** *Who we are should determine how we act.*

Imagine a Marine recruit after five weeks of basic training. He's crawling under barbed wire with live machine gun fire inches above his head. He freezes. Panic grips him. His sergeant comes alongside and says, "Get a grip on yourself. You are a Marine, act like one." *Who we are should determine how we act.*

In this passage, Paul is saying, *"For three chapters I've taught you who you are as a child of God. Now I'm telling you to act like one."* Understand who you are. Believe who you are. Act like who you are.

Ask yourself this question, *"Does my lifestyle equal who I am in Jesus? Am I walking the worthy walk?"* Too many Christians gladly receive the benefits of believing, but ignore their obligation to serve God. Still others think they are serving the Lord when they are not. Peter Marshall, once the chaplain of the U.S. Senate commented on the commitment level of the 20<sup>th</sup> century American Christians saying, *"They are like deep-sea divers encased in suits designed for many fathoms deep, marching bravely forth to pull plugs out of bathtubs."*

As we examine this passage of Scripture, let's examine the call of the worthy walk, the characteristics of the worthy walk and the cause of the worthy walk.

## **I. The Call of the Worthy Walk (v.1).**

### **A. Paul was Imprisoned because of His Worthy Walk.**

Notice the Apostle describes himself as **"the prisoner of the Lord."** In his mind he was not a prisoner of the Romans but a **"prisoner of the Lord."**

In a subtle way, he is reminding us that walking the worthy walk can be costly. However, he's not asking us to do something he himself was not doing. When I was an upperclass cadet at the Air Force Academy there were many times when I had the fourth class cadets do pushups for different things they had done wrong. But every time I instructed them to do pushups, I got down on my hands and toes and did pushups with them. I got down in front of them and challenged them to keep up with me.

Paul takes away our excuses. We might be tempted to say, I want to live like you say Paul, but you don't know my circumstances. Well, are they tougher than being in chains for the Lord? Paul was literally in chains in a Roman prison as he penned these words. However, he considered himself **"the prisoner of the Lord"** whether he was in chains or not. He had learned to view everything vertically instead of horizontally. He viewed everything in relation to Christ, not himself.

## B. Paul Begs us Walk Worthy.

Notice the word "**beseech**." It means "to implore, entreat or beg." It comes from an interesting Greek word *parakaleo* which literally translates "to come along side to help."

This word has intensity. Paul is not giving us a subtle suggestion; rather this is a divine standard. He's not whispering this softly; He's pleading intensely. The worthy walk is not a take-it-or-leave-it proposition.

People sometimes get annoyed at pastors and Bible teachers who "**beseech**" or beg them "**to walk worthy**." When someone is preaching the truth of the Word and it makes you upset, you probably need to be upset. You may be upset because of the guilt of sin in your life. Someone said, "*When you throw a rock in a pack of dogs, the one that howls is the one you hit.*" A pastor or preacher who will not "**beseech**" people to be saved and walk worthy of their calling is not worthy of his office.

Every believer has the responsibility of encouraging and exhorting others in obedience to the Lord. It is YOUR job to encourage others to live righteously. Guess what? You can't encourage, entreat, "**beseech**" or beg them to do something you are not doing.

## C. Paul Reminds us that the Worthy Walk is a Calling.

What is "**the calling with which you were called**?" It is the Lord's call to salvation. You didn't initiate your salvation, Jesus did! He "**called**" you.

If you are saved, you are "**called**" or chosen of God. Rom.8:28 says, "**And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.**"

Jesus said in Jn.6:44, "**No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.**" In Jn.15:16, He said, "**You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit.**"

We already saw in chapter 2 that all men are by nature "**dead in trespasses and sins**." There is no spiritual life in us. Therefore, if God did not call to men, they would not and could not *want* to come to Him. Every lost person is at "**enmity**" with God. Jesus came "**to seek and save that which was lost.**" He provided the way of salvation and the calling to be saved.

Eph.1:4 says, "**He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world...**" Why did He call us? "**...that we should be holy and without blame before Him.**" What does that mean?... to "**walk worthy of the calling.**"

We have been "**called**" to be the children of God. To "**walk worthy of the calling**" means we should live up to who He made us to be.

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

How can we know when we are walking the worthy walk? How can we know that what we are doing is in balance with who we are? The Apostle doesn't leave us hanging. He gives us five characteristic of the believer who lives out the worthy walk.

### A. First, Walking Worthy is exhibiting "Lowliness" (v.2a).

The word "**lowliness**" is also translated "humility." Scholars tell us that the Greeks and Romans had no word for humility for it was a quality they despised.

This was a term coined by Christians. Sometimes we can understand a word by its antithesis, the opposite. The word for pride means "mega-souled" or "great soul."

Pride is the opposite of "**lowliness**" or humility. The first sin came about as a result of pride. Every other sin has been an extension of pride. Someone said that at the middle of every sin is an "I."

On the other hand, humility or "**lowliness**" is the most foundational Christian virtue. Jesus is the greatest example of humility. Phil.2:8 says, "**And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.**" He said of Himself in Mt.11:29, "**Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart...**"

On the other hand, there is no virtue more foreign to the world. The world exalts pride. Unfortunately many Christians adopt their world's value system.

How can we become more humble? First get a proper view of God. begin with a proper view of the greatness of God. Then begin to see yourself for who you are. Everything that makes us proud is like nothing compared to the greatness of God.

True humility is elusive. Like the old Mac Davis song, "O Lord, it's hard to be humble when you're perfect in every way." Without Christ we are so prone to the sin of pride, that we can even take pride in our humility. Paul warns about false humility in Colossians 3:18 and 23, "**Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility ... These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.**" Chances are if you think you are humble you probably are not!

## B. Second, Walking Worthy is showing "Gentleness" (v.2b).

"**Lowliness**" or humility naturally produces "**gentleness**" or meekness. You cannot be gentle or meek without being humble. Pride and meekness cannot coexist. They are mutually exclusive.

Sometimes people think of meekness as the quality of being timid, indifferent or even cowardly. A meek person may be misunderstood to be a quart low of courage. This is not what the biblical word means.

This Greek term for meek was used to describe mighty war-horses. These animals were trained to submit to their masters, yet they were strong, noble creatures. The idea is "strength under control."

The opposite of "**gentleness**" is to be vindictive or vengeful. The word has nothing at all to do with timidity, indifference or cowardice.

Num.12:3 says that "**the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.**" Yet, this humble, gentle man fearlessly confronted the Pharaoh on behalf of the people of God. Moses delivered the people and received the law. He was fearless, yet gentle.

Again, Jesus described Himself as being "**gentle and lowly in heart**" in Mt.11:29, yet no one would deny His power. Jesus had power under control. As the song says, "He could have called ten thousand angels" to get him off that

cross. But in humility and meekness He stayed on the cross. He refused to retaliate.

When the soldiers came to arrest Jesus, He protected His disciples but refused to protect Himself. In Jn.18:6, when He proclaimed His identity **"they drew back and fell to the ground."** They glimpsed His power.

When Peter attacked one of them, Jesus said, **"Do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?"** (Mt.26:53). Jesus had power under control.

What about you? Are you a gentle, meek person? Do you allow the Holy Spirit to control the urge and the power to be vengeful and vindictive? Are you quick to forgive and quick to restore? That's what it means to **"walk worthy."**

#### C. Third, Walking Worthy is being "Longsuffering" (v.2c).

We might think of this word as "patient." It literally means to be "long-tempered." When you are humble, **"gentleness"** will flow from your life. When you are gentle, you will naturally be patient or **"longsuffering."**

Have you ever prayed, **"Lord give me patience and give it to me right now!?"**

Patience is a great characteristic of God. 2 Pet.3:5 says, **"consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation."** It is also a characteristic of mature godly people. Noah was told to build the ark but waited 120 years to see his obedience rewarded.

I would love for everyone in this church to be spiritually mature. But we are not all there yet. I have to be patient with you! You have to be patient with me. Mature Christians are patient with others. They don't become angry quickly. They are "long-tempered."

#### D. Fourth, Walking Worthy is "Bearing with One Another in Love" (v.2d).

**"Bearing with one another"** means a willingness to put up with something or someone in the spirit of love. This is the idea given in 1 Cor.13, **"Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil..."** (vv.4-5).

This is the type of love that will cover **"a multitude of sins"** (Ja.5:12). It throws a blanket over the sins, faults and failures of others, not to hide them or excuse them but to forgive them.

**"Bearing with one another in love"** doesn't just mean tolerating each other but reaching out to each other. Love is the oil that lubricates our relationships.

Peter started out as a rough, impatient, ill-tempered fisherman. However, because of God's forbearing love and grace in his life, he would later write and tell us to have a **"sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart [lit. "From the heart"]"** (1 Pet.1:22). He also said in 2:17, **"Love the brotherhood."**

Do we have that kind of forbearing love for each other?

#### E. Fifth, Walking Worthy is living in "Unity" (v.3).

This week I read a quote from a baseball coach. He said, *"It's easy to get good players. Getting them to play together, that's the hard part."* What's true in baseball is also true in the ministry of the local church.

When Paul says we are **"to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"** it is an urgent command. It is a call to dispense with rivalries, hatreds and the things that divide us.

All believers are called to be **"peacemakers."** Jesus said in Mt.5:9, **"Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God."** If we are the **"sons of God"** we ought to act like **"sons of God"** by striving for **"unity"** and **"peace."**

Two battleships met in the night and began to attack each other. In the conflict, a number of crewmen were severely wounded, and both vessels were damaged. As daylight broke, the sailors on the ships discovered to their amazement that both vessels flew the English flag.

Like those sailors, Christians sometimes "attack their own ships," and the victory that could have been won by battling the real enemy is lost. Often in battle, more are injured by friendly fire than by the enemy. Let's be careful to guard the precious unity of the Spirit.

### III. The Cause of the Worthy Walk (vv.4-6).

#### A. We walk Worthy because of the Spirit (v.4).

Paul reminds us here that there is but **"one body," "one Spirit"** and **"one hope."** This focuses us on the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Though there may be many local churches and many fellowships of believers throughout the world, there is only **"one body"** of Christ. When you were saved, the **"one"** Holy Spirit immersed you spiritually into this body (**1 Cor.12:13**).

The **"one hope"** of our calling is to be like Jesus. One day we will see Him and be made like Him, but until then we strive as 1:4 says, **"to be holy and without blame before Him in love."**

#### B. We walk Worthy because of the Son (v.5).

We can also be unified because we have **"one Lord, one faith"** and **"one baptism."** All of this relates to the Lord Jesus.

We have only one Lord. Acts 4:12 says, **"for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."**

**"One faith"** refers to true NT Christianity. Jude 3 refers to it as **"the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints."**

**"One baptism"** I believe this to refer to the spiritual baptism that happens at salvation. Water baptism is an outward symbol of that inward reality.

#### C. We walk Worthy because of the Father (v.6).

Though we may be different, we are unified in the **"Father of all."** Do we act like it? Are you walking the worthy walk? Are you in unity with your brothers and sister?