

16. WALK WORTHY OF YOUR CALLING, PART 1

(SUNDAY, JANUARY 12, 2020)

Scripture Reading: Exodus 19:1-6; Eph. 4:1-6

INTRODUCTION

Eric Tucker and Wednesday Prayer Meeting

Indicative: What God has done for you in Jesus Christ

Imperative: What God calls you now to do

Almost every book of Paul has these two elements.

Sometimes the order is reversed, Titus for example.

We should not think, we are done with the boring doctrine and we move to exciting application.

Change, but application is deeply theological.

We are to act and think like Christians.

Central command of the book of Ephesians is 4:1.

One commentator:

All that now follows in the rest of the letter may be considered as an expansion of the appeal that has just been made.¹

Walk – 4:1 to 5:21, everything is structured around this verb.²

As you look at verses 1-6, you can see two connected parts:

1-3: Walk worthy of your calling, keep the unity of the Spirit

4-6: Unity is based on theological oneness

We are going to focus just on verses 1-3 today.

¹ Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 10 of Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. IVP/Accordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 117.

² Snodgrass, 194.

1. WALK WORTHY OF YOUR CALLING

Luther was deeply concerned with the gospel and that his people lived according to the gospel message.

We must know the truth, believe the gospel.

We must live according to the truth.

Christian faith is not a cult.

We are not to live by fear or slavery.

We are to live according to the gospel, in obedience to God's truth.

Klyne Snodgrass: Christianity is a God-directed, Christ-defined, other-oriented religion.³

Reality is that we (Christians) so often fail in living as we are called.

The commands of this passage show this is not natural.

What is natural: me, what I want to do, when I want to do it.

We are not part of a cult, but there is a need for encouragement, rebuke, and sometimes discipline in the context of a local church.

We are not given all the details here, but an incredible foundation is given.

Verse 1 – Paul reminds us again he is not a free man.

He is a prisoner. (3:1)

His suffering for the gospel and of course his calling as an apostle of Jesus Christ gives him a basis for making a strong charge to his readers.

[John Calvin: The apostle's prison is more truly venerable than the splendid retinue or triumphal chariot of kings.](#)

Beseech

Older verb, but a good translation

Urge – newer translations

³ Snodgrass, 197.

Strong plea, not a pulpit pounding

This is not a tip for a better life, this is the call of God.

Walk worthy of the calling with which you were called!

Walk – very common

Walk worthy – 1x

Ephesians - We once walked just according to the forces and influences of this world (2:2). Later we are called to walk in love, walk as children of the light, walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. (5:2, 8, 15).

Notice the word worthy is connected with our calling.

Not about paying God back or self-righteousness.

Has God called you by His grace?

Did Jesus Christ shed His blood for you?

Have you been given hope now that is greater than just the things of this world?

Then live in a way that reflects the sovereign and gracious calling you have been given.

Notice: It is not that God simply calls us to be nice and kind people.

We are to be kind and gracious. But we must never separate the command from the foundation – God’s undeserved grace, the blood of Jesus Christ, the working of the Holy Spirit.

Verses 2-3 explain what this means.

What would you say is the focus of Paul’s instruction?

It seems to be focused especially on how we treat others.

However, it must begin with our attitude before God and then connect with how we treat others.

If we are not first humbled before God, then we will never truly be humble before men.

Phil. 2:8 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.*

Translations vary in capturing the words in verse 2.

Some interesting meanings, but the translation in the NKJV is quite good.

Lowliness

Gentleness

Longsuffering

Bearing with one another in love

Lowliness

Various commentators point out that the noun translated as lowliness or humility does not seem to have been used before the time of the NT.

The related adjective had a bad meaning, slavish, mean, ignoble.⁴

This is not weakness, but a submission first of all to God and then a humility before others.

Here is a very important verse from Matthew.

Matt. 11:29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am **gentle** and **lowly** in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Same two words, just opposite order)

Gentleness – again not an effeminate weakness, but a proper use of strength.

One definition: **the quality of not being overly impressed by a sense of one's self-importance.**⁵

Gentleness could also be translated as meekness, again not weakness.

Who is the meekest person in the OT?

Moses.

Was Moses weak?

⁴ Foulkes, 115.

⁵ BDAG, s.v. "πραΰτης," 861.

Here is another great definition.

Meekness 'is the spirit of one who is so absorbed in seeking some worthy goal for the common good that he refuses to be deflected from it by slights, injuries or insults directed at himself personally, or indeed by personal considerations of any kind'.⁶

Longsuffering – the word describes what its meaning is.

Steadfast endurance under provocation⁷

Slowness in avenging wrong or retaliating when hurt by another.⁸

Bearing or putting up with each other in love.

Do you see how realistic Paul's view is of Christian behavior?

John Calvin's comments on this passage were very rich, I think especially because of how difficult his life and ministry were in Geneva.

The time of the Reformation was a time of great struggle.

Christian ministry, the life in most local churches is rarely just one happy day after another.

When you put together your Christmas family photo, you look for everyone in the picture to be happy and smiling.

Would you say this characterizes your family 99.9% of the time?

Probably not.

We want the smiling photo to characterize our church and how we deal with each other.

Is that the reality?

Bearing or putting up with each other, having to endure each other.

⁶ Foulkes, 116. Foulkes was giving the definition put forth by Mitton (NCB).

⁷ BDAG, s.v. "μακροθυμία," 612.

⁸ Foulkes, 116.

We do it not with a frown, but with love.

Col. 3:13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also *must do*.

Endeavoring or making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Do everything that you can to keep the **unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace**.

Paul was a prisoner.

The word bond can mean a handcuff, something that binds.

This is to be a bond that keeps us together, the bond of peace.

Col. 3:14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

We must observe. This bond of peace is not something we create.

It is a gift that is given.

Our responsibility is to keep it.⁹

John Calvin wrote:

Oh, were this thought deeply impressed upon our minds, that we are subject to a law which no more permits the children of God to differ among themselves than the kingdom of heaven to be divided, how earnestly should we cultivate brotherly kindness! How should we dread every kind of animosity, if we duly reflected that all who separate us from brethren, estrange us from the kingdom of God! And yet, strangely enough, while we forget the duties which brethren owe to each other, we go on boasting that we are the sons of God. Let us learn from Paul, that none are at all fit for that inheritance who are not one body and one spirit.

⁹ Foulkes, 117.

Verses 4-6 continue with this great theme of unity. Lord willing, this will be our focus next week.

Conclusion:

Eph. 4:1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to **walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,**

Never lose sight of the calling that you have been given.

This is the richness of chapters 1-3.

This is the glory of the gospel.

If Jesus humbled Himself to die on the cross, can you not humble yourself as you deal with others?

The unity and diversity of Scripture means that there is going to be a fair amount of repetition.

Parenting is very repetitive

A lot of life is repetitive

I say this to emphasize, this text is not alone in terms of the call of Scripture.

But here we should ask, as I think about the situations I face, how does this passage particularly direct me?

Is there is a situation where this text calls for repentance, confession, and forgiveness?

Satan wants to twist God's truth and also encourages God's people to live as hypocrites.

We need to hold tightly to God's truth.

We need to walk worthy of the calling that God has sovereignly and graciously given to us.

Prayer

Closing Hymn: 285

Benediction: Eph. 3:20-21

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.