

Walk Worthy, part 1

April 3, 2016

We are starting a new sermon series this morning for the month of April. It is titled "Walk Worthy". It is about walking. God is concerned about how you walk. And so we should also be concerned with how we walk. As followers of Jesus Christ, we should want to walk correctly, like He did. As members of His church we must want to walk with each other correctly, as He taught His first followers to do.

To learn how to walk correctly we are going to be looking at the fourth and fifth chapters of the letter called Ephesians in the Bible. I am using the Holman Christian Standard Bible this morning.

Ephesians 4:1 (HCSB) Therefore I, the prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk worthy of the calling you have received,

I urge you to walk worthy of the calling you have received. There are four likely questions raised by this statement.

Question 1. Why is Paul a prisoner?

The short answer is that he was arrested for preaching about Jesus. He is in a Roman jail awaiting his chance to present his case before the Roman Caesar. So was a prisoner for Jesus when he wrote this letter.

Question 2. Why is he interested in how we walk?

(Ephesians 2:2, 10; 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15)

The normal Greek word for "walk", appears 88 times in the NT. It is used for people walking to the temple, walking through a field of wheat, and of Jesus walking on the water. But it is also used figuratively several dozen times in both the old and new testaments. **Figuratively, "walk" means the way you live.**

So to walk worthy means to live worthy. We are told to live worthy of the calling we have received. I have listed all the figurative uses of this word in the book of Ephesians.

Question 3. What is the calling we have received?

We have been called by God to His salvation. And in that salvation, we have received all the blessings available to those who put their faith in Jesus. He lists some of them at the beginning of this letter. To save time, since this is a long passage, I'm going to summarize the blessings for you.

- God has set us apart unto Himself. 1.4
- God has adopted us into His family. 1.5
- God has redeemed us, forgiving our sins. 1.7
- God has revealed to us the mystery of His will. 1.9
- God has given us the Holy Spirit. 1.13

All of these and more are the blessings from God to all those who answer His call. Any Price Is Right TV show fans? At the beginning of the show, certain individuals are called to "Come on down!" to the front of the stage and bid on a product. They are

invited. That's what God's call to us is. It is His invitation to receive His salvation through faith in Jesus.

Question 4. What does it mean to walk/live worthy of our calling?

First, it does NOT mean to try to become worthy of receiving these blessings by merit. Do not take his words to mean you must become worthy of receiving them. You will NEVER be worthy of receiving them. You can never earn these for yourself. You will never deserve them.

No, we received them as a gift, not as something owed to us. But now that you have them, strive to live as if you were worthy of them.

Paul is pointing us to the standard of behavior for Jesus followers. We don't deserve these blessings, but we have received these blessings. Let that motivate you to live up to them. **Live up to the blessings you have received.**

Imagine that there was someone who DID deserve these blessings. Imagine that some one person WAS worthy of receiving them by merit. How would such a person be living? How would such a person talk, behave, relate to other people? That is the standard Paul is giving us.

If I told my sons, "Shifflett men are gentlemen," I would do so expecting them to live up to that label. I would teach them what it means to be gentleman, how a gentleman speaks and behaves. I would model it for them. They would see me opening the car door for my wife. They would see me scooting her chair in if needed. They would hear me using good manners at home as well as in public. They would see me doing acts of kindness and being gentle with people. I would be giving them a standard to live up to.

That is what Paul is saying in verse 1. Live up to the blessings you have received.

So how do we do that? He gives us some specifics in chapters four and five that we are going to examine over the month of April. He uses that word walk figuratively five times in these two chapters. That is the basis for this series of sermons. So let's read on and see what specifics he gives us.

Ephesians 4:1-3 (HCSB) Therefore I, the prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk worthy of the calling you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, accepting one another in love, diligently keeping the unity of the Spirit with the peace that binds [us].

Give up your ego.

He tells us to walk with all humility. Humility is the priority attitude we must adopt for ourselves as Christians. Our very salvation began with humility. We took a humble view of ourselves and agreed with God that we were sinners deserving of nothing better than death and hell.

We have some pretty smart people in our church. We have people in management positions of various kinds. We have people who are highly skilled in computers, in

security, in police work, in government, in teaching. We have students who are getting really good grades, winning awards, winning competitions. We have people who are excelling at sports.

Out in the world the people who excel at such things are tempted to act like they are better than the rest of us. But in the church, we must not act that way. We must take a different view of ourselves, even if we are more talented and skilled than others.

Humility does not mean to belittle yourself. Humility does not mean to lie about your good qualities, skills, awards, etc. But in humility you do not treat others differently who are not as talented as you are in some way. You do not brag on yourself. You do not take glory from God for the things you have achieved. You do not look down on those with less intelligence, less skill, less talent. Do not let yourself become proud, egotistical, or bragging about who you are, what you can do, or what you have.

In humility we will treat each other with respect and gentleness, always trying to be careful of each other's feelings. There are some people in churches who do not care about how people feel. They take a very harsh view of church life. They want clear expectations, rules, and duties. They expect people to fulfill these things without any compassion for what it costs them to do so. If people do not fulfill their responsibilities then remove them from their position.

You can do that in a place of employment. Do the job or you get fired. But the church is not a place of employment. The church is made up of volunteers. And you don't treat volunteers the same as employees.

In humility we must be gentle with each other, not harsh, not demanding, but compassionate and sympathetic. We are not to excuse sin in each other, but in humility and with gentleness, help each other to grow in our obedience to Jesus.

Give up your impatience. We must be patient with each other. We must be patient with each other because we are at different stages of Christian development. We are at different places in our understanding of the riches we have in Christ. We are at different places in our life situations. Some are dealing with tough life issues. We have people with different personalities and temperaments.

Some of you may not know this, though many do. We have a few perfectionists in our church. Sometimes they admit to it and other times they are blind to it, or at least blind to how it affects others. Your perfectionism and demand for details sometimes irritates other people. You may not realize that. We need you to try to be more understanding of them.

You who get irritated by the perfectionists need to be patient with them. You have your quirks too that the rest of us need to be patient with.

We have a few people that too easily speak their mind. And that often steps on the feelings of others.

We have some who hate to start late, and others who are habitually late.

We have some who don't mind cluttered rooms or closets, saving almost anything that MIGHT be used another day. At the same time we have people who get distracted and stressed by the clutter and disorganization. It isn't that they just don't like it. The clutter actually wears on them. It is a kind of stress.

You collectors need to be patient with the "get-rid-of-it" folks. And the "get-rid-of-it" folks need to be patient with the collectors. Sometimes we collect and sometimes we throw away. There is a time for everything under the sun. And patience is needed at all times.

We have people who are talented at something and know it. We have some who think they are talented at something and are wrong. We have some who are not talented and know that.

We have extroverts and introverts. Sometimes we all expect everyone else to be like us, or at least to try to understand why we are not like them. That takes patience.

We have older folks who physically cannot do what they used to do and younger folks who don't understand why they won't.

We have people who like the older music more than the newer music and people who like the newer music more than the older music.

We have some who want more fellowship activities and others who are more interested in service activities.

We are not all the same. The one thing we have in common is our faith in Jesus. Everything else about us may be entirely different. And that takes patience as we serve Jesus together as a church family.

Paul writes that we must "diligently keep the unity of the Spirit." **The unity of the Spirit is our common faith in Jesus.** What brought us together as a church was our love of Jesus.

If we were not a church together, but lived in the same neighborhood, we might not be friends. There may not be anything that draws us together as people. We have different interests, different talents, different life situations, different problems, different goals, different lifestyles, different personalities. We may not be at all alike in any significant way.

But none of these things are what draw us together. We are drawn together by our love for Jesus. That is the unity of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit brought us together to be a church family. We are not all the same, but we serve Jesus together.

That is sometimes hard work. It calls for humility and patience and a dedication to being church successfully together. And such is walking worthy of the calling we have received.

Walk worthy of the high calling you have received. Live up to the standard of the one you follow. Do this and Jesus will be glorified through you, and through us.

Invitation:

Is Jesus drawing you to Himself? Do you hear, in your heart, God calling you to His salvation? Today, say yes and become a follower of Jesus.

E. Stanley Jones tells of a missionary who got lost in an African jungle, nothing around him looked familiar. There was nothing but jungle, no discernable path anywhere. He stumbled upon a village and asked a native if he could get him out. The native said he could.

"All right," said the missionary, "Show me the way."

The native said, "Follow me."

For the next hour they hacked their way through unmarked jungle. The missionary got worried, and finally asked the man, "Are you quite sure this is the way? Where is the path?"

The native said, "In this place there is no path. I am the path."

Jesus is the path to life. Are you following Him?

Is Jesus drawing you to become a more committed, faithful, humble, gentle, and patient part of this church family?