

Walking Worthy

1/29/22

Sermon 12

Ephesians Series

Ephesians 4:1–6 (CSB)

4 Therefore I, the prisoner in the Lord, urge you to walk worthy of the calling you have received, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope^c at your calling—⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

Introduction: [Paul's metaphor changes in Chapter 4.](#)

A. The first 3 chapters are connected with the theme of "Seated".

1. Paul writes often about Jesus, who is seated at the right hand of the Father.
2. And because Christ is seated at the right hand, we, too, are seated with Christ in the heavenly realm.
3. To "sit" is to be in a position of completion.
 - a. The work is done.
 - b. Now, it is time to enjoy and rest in what has been accomplished.
4. However, it seems that this would be the last step for believers.
 - a. For most of us, we sit at the end of the day or the task.

b. But for believers, it is the first thing we learn to do.

c. **Until we can sit in the completed work of Christ, we are not ready to walk in our calling.**

B. Paul changes the dominant metaphor from “sit” to “walk.”

1. Over and over again, Paul describes how believers are to “walk” in this new position with Christ.

2. **In Christ’s Kingdom, being comes before doing.**

3. We sit in our position of Christ first, and then we walk in the calling we have received.

1. Paul knows whom he is walking with.

A. “Therefore I, the prisoner in the Lord....”

1. Not “a prisoner of Rome”.

2. Not “prisoner of circumstances.”

3. But the prisoner in the Lord.

4. **“...while Paul may be incarcerated by Rome, he has actually been captured by the Lord. Christ, not Rome, is truly in charge, and Paul belongs to him and has been incorporated into him.”¹**

B. Knowing the who and the why of walking matters.

1. In ancient contexts, prisoners walked differently than the victorious soldiers.

2. Captured soldiers would often be led in a triumphal procession back to the capital city to be paraded, humiliated, and even executed.

a. On the contrary, the victorious army marched with their heads held high.

¹ Osborne, Grant R. 2017. *Ephesians: Verse by Verse*. Osborne New Testament Commentaries. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

b. And the winning general rode on a white horse, paraded as the hero.

3. Paul had no problem admitting that he was a prisoner.

a. But he refused to give credit to Rome for his present situation.

b. Instead, he saw his situation through a much larger lens.

c. He wasn't a victim to circumstances: he was instead walking out a plan that Jesus had for Him.

d. And even though that plan was at times painful and difficult, it was God's plan and purpose, and Paul was operating within that plan.

4. **Our culture spends too much time teaching people how to be better victims instead of people of God.**

a. Part of my calling is to bring a faith perspective.

b. Most of us in this room are realists and practical.

1. I do not have to convince you to see the difficulties, the problems, or what could go wrong.

2. So part of what I'm called to do is remind us of the faith perspective.

a. What does it mean to walk victoriously in Christ Jesus?

b. What does it mean to walk by faith, not by sight?

c. What if we talked more about what God can do than what we can't do?

3. Paul, although under arrest by Roman authorities, could look at his situation and declare: I'm a prisoner of the Lord.

C. **When we walk with Jesus, He sets the pace.**

1. Whom you walk with determines the pace.
 - a. You walk differently with your great-grandma than you do with your grandkid.
 - b. We walk differently in a uniform than we do wearing pajamas.
2. When we live for Jesus, we walk according to His pace.
 - a. We step when He steps.
 - b. We pause when he pauses.
 - c. We go where He leads us.

2. Walk Worthy of the calling you have received.

A. The word Paul uses here is "axios".

1. Eugene Peterson helps explain this:

Axios is a word with a picture in it...An axios is a set of balancing scales, the kind of scales formed by a crossbeam balanced on a post, with pans suspended from each end of the beam. You place a lead weight of, say, one pound in one pan, and then measure out flour into the other pan until the two pans are in balance. Balance means to be in equilibrium. When the flour in one pan balances the one-pound lead weight in the other, you know you have one pound of flour. The unknown weight of what is being measured in one pan is equivalent to the known weight in the other. **The two items, lead and flour, are axios - worthy. They have the same value, or, in this case, weight.** They can be as different as lead and flour, but they "fit," like a pair of shoes fits a man's feet, like a dress fits a woman's body, like a crescent wrench fits the head of a nut, like a wedding ring fits the finger of the beloved. The items balanced in the Ephesians scales are God's calling and human living: "I beg you," writes Paul, "to walk (peripateo) worthy of the calling to which you have been called (kaleo)." **When our walking and God's calling are in balance, we are whole; we are living maturely, living responsively to God's calling, living congruent with the way God calls us into being.** Axios, worthy - mature, healthy, robust.ⁱ (Peterson)

2. To walk worthy of the calling is to be balanced in both our walk and our calling.

B. So what is our calling?

1. Paul said in Ephesians 1:18–19 (CSB)

¹⁸I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the mighty working of his strength.

2. Your calling is not defined by what you do, but whom you are called to be.

a. Your gifts are not the focus of your calling.

b. The Giftings are expressions of our relationship to Jesus.

C. To walk worthy is to be in balance with who we are in Christ and how we live for Christ.

1. That is why we sit before we walk.

2. "Christian belief comes before Christian living. The mindset must be changed before one's conduct can follow suit."²

3. Who you are in Christ Jesus is more important than what you do for Jesus.

a. That is why Jesus could say there will be people who cast out demons and heal the sick, and yet the Father rejects them.

b. We must never divorce what we do for Jesus from who we are in Jesus.

D. To walk worthy is to be in balance and maturity.

² Osborne, Grant R. 2017. [Ephesians: Verse by Verse](#). Osborne New Testament Commentaries. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

1. It means I'm walking in my giftings and in a relationship with Jesus.
2. And I'm not too heavy on one side or the other but in balance.
3. What does that look like?

3. Characteristics of a Christian's Walk.

²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

A. Interestingly, Paul doesn't talk about productivity first.

1. He talks about giftings in a minute.
2. **What Paul lists here is more like the fruit of the Holy Spirit than the fruit of human effort.**
 - a. I like to get stuff done, but that isn't a priority.
 - b. I like to be busy, but that isn't a badge of Christian maturity.
3. How do we walk worthy of the calling?

B. **We are to walk with Humility and Gentleness**

1. This is very different from the Roman ideal.
 - a. Rome wasn't known for humility or gentleness.
 - b. But Jesus was.
 - c. Isaiah prophesied, and Matthew 12:20 confirms, that Jesus would not break a bruised or damaged reed or put out a smoldering flax.
 - d. Jesus' teachings in Matthew 5 extol the peacemakers, the humble, and the meek.
2. If people were to walk in your footsteps, would they see Jesus' humility and gentleness in your life?

a. I'm afraid that most of us would convince people that Jesus was mean, angry, and hostile instead of humble and gentle.

b. Sure, Jesus is no wimp.

c. We must not confuse humility and gentleness with weakness.

3. Instead, show people how gentle and humble He has been to you.

C. We are to walk in Patience.

1. Patience is a fruit of the Spirit because we do not do it well on our own.

a. Yet, to walk worthy of the calling we have received is to walk patiently.

b. We cannot hurry God, and we cannot hurry others.

c. But we live in a world that is harassed and harried, not patient.

2. A grocery store chain in Holland is trying something unique:ⁱⁱ

a. They have started "slow checkout lanes" where people who are not in a hurry and desire to socialize can choose to be instead of feeling like they are holding up the line.

b. This was originally designed for senior citizens, many whom profess to loneliness.

c. Whereas in America, we prize efficiency and many of us are happy to self-checkout to speed things up, parts of Europe are finding ways to slow down and accommodate people whose needs are better met when we slow down.

3. **Jesus ministered at the speed of a walk.**

a. 2-4 miles per hour was how fast Jesus traveled.

b. At that speed:

1. Jesus could see people as he walked by.
2. People could catch Jesus as he walked by.
3. Jesus had time to notice a man in a tree.
4. Jesus had time to have a conversation with a woman at a well.

c. To be like Jesus is to walk patiently, making time for people to be seen, heard, and disciplined.

D. We walk Lovingly Uplifting.

1. "Bearing with one another in love."
2. I love this definition:

Bearing with one another in love allows one to negotiate the conflicts that inevitably emerge in relationships. It is enduring a behaviour and then working through it. Unity requires tolerance at a relational level without being indifferent to truth.³

3. Another way to say this is we are to "suffer" with each other.
 - a. When multiple people work together, there will be times when our togetherness is more like suffering than fun.
 - b. But if we get mad and quit, or gossip, or slander each other, we are not "bearing with one another in love" we are instead being divisive.
4. Every one of us are in the middle of our sanctification.
 - a. Not one of us are perfect in every action or deed.
 - b. We all have difficulties in our lives, and sometimes we let them out in the safety of church community.
5. How can we expect Jesus to love us through our toughest moments and not extend that kind of love to others?

³ Bock, Darrell L. 2019. *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*. Edited by Eckhard J. Schnabel. Vol. 10. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. London: Inter-Varsity Press.

E. Walk **Intent on Unity**

1. Some people are divisive, no matter how you treat or love them.
2. Paul told the pastor Titus to have nothing to do with them.
3. Otherwise, we are to strive for unity.
 - a. The Trinity is perfectly unified, although also distinct.
 - b. What we are to strive for is a unity that reflects the nature of God.
4. You cannot walk worthy of your calling if you constantly look for opportunities to divide.

Close: How we walk and live matters.

A. The question today is: Are you walking worthy with Jesus?

1. Are you so focused on what you are doing for Jesus and not being with Jesus?
2. Are there elements in your walk that is putting you out of step with Him?
 - a. Are you not patient?
 - b. Are you not humble?
 - c. Are you not gentle?
 - d. Are you not loving?

B. Today, I call us all to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal how He wants us to walk and live.

1. To bring us back into balance and in step with Jesus.
2. May you walk worthy of the calling you have received.
3. May we learn to sit with Jesus before we walk with Jesus.

ⁱ The rest of the quote is:

The balancing scales, the *axios*, centers the Ephesian letter. Everything thing in Paul's letter is designed to keep God's calling (chapters 1-3) and our walking (chapters 4-6) in equilibrium. We cannot measure ourselves by examining ourselves in terms of ourselves, by evaluating ourselves against a non-relational abstraction such as "human potential." Nor can we abstract God into an impersonal "truth" apart from our hearing and responding to the words he uses to call us into life, into holiness, into relationship. We can understand neither God nor ourselves in any living, adequate, and mature way that is an impersonal, non-relational way. When God's calling and our walking fit, we are growing up in Christ. God calls; we walk.

Eugene H. Peterson. *Practice Resurrection: A Conversation on Growing Up in Christ* (Kindle Locations 381-393). Kindle Edition.

ⁱⁱ <https://www.thedailymeal.com/1172603/some-european-supermarkets-have-slow-checkout-lanes-for-chatty-shoppers/>