

Jason Upchurch - Ephesians 4:1-3 - Walking Worthy

As I've mentioned before, chapter 4 marks a transition in the book of Ephesians. Paul transitions from deep truths about God and the promises he's made to the practical outworking of those things in the life of Christians.

We see that with the word "therefore" at the beginning of verse 1. And before we dive in here, permit me to digress for a couple minutes and say that a lot of times people think that theology is completely unrelated to how we live our lives as Christians. They think there's no connection; it's almost as though the compartmentalize their faith.

They think somehow talking about the inner working of the Trinity or predestination or the doctrine of sin or the relationship between Jews and Gentiles or the atonement or eschatology or eternal security has no bearing at all as to how they live their lives.

They have this moral bucket over here: stop swearing, be nice to my wife and kids, don't lust, don't be greedy, don't be lazy, don't steal - that's one bucket.

And then there's another bucket over here of all this theology that they don't want to talk about because it's boring or just seems like nitpicking and arguing about minutia that doesn't matter.

And the reality is that that couldn't be further from the truth. The Bible doesn't picture our faith in buckets separated from each other. The Bible connects theology and Christian living like a house is connected to a foundation.

In order to have a solid house, you have to have a proper foundation. Now, can you have a house without a foundation? Absolutely. And it will stand. Sometimes for a long while. But just like Jesus said in the parable, eventually a storm comes and there's rain and floods and wind that beat on the house and if there's no foundation, the house collapses. And it's a massive collapse.

That's how it is in Christianity as well. You have to have a theological foundation for what you're doing, how you're living or the morality you're pushing will collapse.

If you look at the history of denominations and movements that started well and then completely compromised, that compromise is always a theological compromise before it's a moral compromise.

They compromise on hell, they compromise on the atonement, they compromise on the Trinity, they compromise on who God is. "Oh we worship the same God as the Mormons, Muslims and Jews" - no, we don't.

But they compromise on theology and then everyone wonders why they begin to compromise on women's roles, homosexuality, definition of marriage, abortion, wokeness, all the rest - it all started with a rejection of theology. It all started with taking simple, plain passages from the Bible telling us about God, who he is, what he's done, his atoning work, and they reject it.

They compromised because there was no foundation. The house was built on sand.

And if your Christianity has no theological foundation, no deep theology - only a veneer of morality - then eventually people start wondering: why even have the morality? And the morality is set aside just like the theology was set aside. And pretty soon all that's left in your Bible is a series of inoffensive quotes that are taken out of context but sound very much like fortune cookies.

Did ever wonder why whenever Jesus went places or Paul went places they preached about the most complicated theological issues first? This is a constant pattern.

Jesus is telling people he chose them, God blinds eyes, if you don't hate your mother and father and sister and brother you can't follow me. He says you must drink my blood and eat my flesh. Paul and Peter say all the

same things. Paul opens up basically a seminary in Ephesus day 1 and preaches hours a day every day for 3 years. And he preaches the whole Bible.

They don't soft pedal truth. They don't beat around the bush. They don't get people saved on "God is love" and ignore all the rest of Scripture. It's almost like "Well, let's get the hard stuff out of the way and see who's left." Why? Because you have to have a massive granite foundation of theology and Bible if you're going to honor God in the ethical aspects of your life.

Big Picture: Solid doctrine is essential to solid living. **Read 1-2**

Therefore. Therefore what? Since all the last 3 chapters of doctrine is true - amen and amen - therefore walk in a manner worthy of the kingdom.

Solid doctrine is essential to solid living - they flow together.

And what Paul does here is give us one basic command to that effect and then gives 5 modifiers of that command.

1) Command to walk worthy. Read 1

This is the basic thrust of the passage: Walk worthy. Since chapters 1-3 is all true, our conduct should be commensurate with the Kingdom.

Paul says you've been called into the Kingdom. He's talking about the effectual call here. This isn't the general call of all people to be saved. No, this is the effectual call. This is the call of God on elect believers that brought them into the Kingdom the moment they were saved.

When you were saved, when you believed, when you gave your life to Christ, it was God working in you to raise you from death to life. For by grace you have been saved. That was God's effectual call.

Since he called you in, now you walk worthy.

In ancient times - and to some extent even now - when you're called into the service of someone great you conduct yourself in a certain way. During the British empire, people considered it an honor to be put into the service of the King. And if you were in the King's service, you acted like royalty.

If you join the military there is a code of conduct you are called to follow. Sports teams, businesses, judicial proceedings, all have codes of conduct you are called to follow.

God is no different. If he has graciously brought you into the Kingdom, saved you from your sins, given you the covenants and promises and grafted you into the historical people of God, if he's living in you as a Temple of the Holy Spirit working powerfully in you, you better believe he expects a certain type of behavior.

Paul says to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which he called us. He's the King who called us into the Kingdom. Who's the King? God's the King. And God is holy, holy, holy.

A lot of people think "Well, God just accepts me as I am." No he does not. When someone is saved what they're recognizing is their utter sinfulness and wretchedness before a holy God. What they're confessing is their complete inability to please God through their own efforts.

And so salvation - when someone is saved - from our perspective we are begging God to forgive us for our sins. We are asking that our sins be counted to Jesus and Jesus's righteousness be counted to us. And although there are no works that save us, the attitude of a repentant sinner is that we would be willing to swim any ocean, climb any mountain, do any task if we could just get into the Kingdom.

And the scandal of the gospel - the true good news - is we do nothing at all to get in. Jesus has done it all for us.

And yet if we'd be willing to swim any ocean or climb any mountain, then we should gladly walk in a manner worthy of calling to which he's called us.

By the way, the Bible says this kind of thing many times.

Col. 1:10: Walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

If the Lord were here right now, looking at our lives, how would we walk? How would we live? Then that's how we should live.

1 Thess 2:12: Walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

Same thing. Listen, God Almighty called you personally into the Kingdom. Into his own Kingdom and into his own glory. Your name was written in the Book of Life before the world began. He wrote your name down. And when your time came, he called you in personally and raised you to spiritual life and he expects us to act like.

Phil 1:27: let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ.

This is a high calling.

And by the way, when Paul says this notice that he's not up in some ivory tower telling the peasants how to live their lives. Where's Paul at? **Read 1**

Paul's in prison. He's not bitter, he's not upset or angry. He's in jail doing what he's calling the Ephesians to be doing as they walk around freely. **Turn to Acts 16:19-34**

Most of you know this episode. This isn't when Paul wrote Ephesians, but I turn here to show you his attitude in the midst of adversity. Remember he had been walking around Philippi and a demon possessed girl kept annoying him so he cast the demon out. The owners of this slave girl were mad so they drug Paul and Silas to the magistrates. And while they did that the crowd beat the tar out of both them.

So they're bloody and beaten for doing a good thing by casting out a demon. And then they're thrown in prison with their feet in the stocks. **Read 19-34**

You know what their conduct is? It's worthy of the Kingdom. It's so worthy that not only do they save the lives of the prisoners, who would have been executed if they escaped, but they save the life of the jailer who becomes a Christian along with his house.

By the way, what were they doing at the bottom of the prison that gave away that they were Christians? Singing. And praying.

We've been called into the Kingdom. We've been called into God's glory and the gospel. We've been saved and raised to life by a holy God. Our lives should reflect that.

Now, let's go back to Ephesians 4 and see how that plays out. Paul actually tells us exactly what that means.

I mean, if we were just told "walk in a manner worthy" that's fine and all, but how do we do that? Well, Paul tells us specifically. There are 5 ways we do that.

And it occurred to me this morning: all 5 of these have to do with how we treat each other in the Church. How we interact with each other.

Walking worthy has a lot to do with how we treat each other.

A) Walk in humility. Read 1-2

So notice that humility, gentleness, so on describe the walking. So the first way we walk in a manner worthy is walking in humility.

What is humility? It's counting others greater than yourself. It's having a proper perspective of your place in the grand scheme of the universe.

Phil. 2:3: Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourself.

I like that. Count other people more significant than yourself.

And just to be clear, it's not just saying that. It's not just giving a verbal nod to that. It's actually believing that others are more significant than you.

One of the most galling things I hear is when husbands refer to their wife as "their better half" and then they turn around and complain about that same better half. So they give lip service to it, but they don't actually believe it.

Jesus gives the parable of the banquet in **Luke 14:7-11** remember where someone comes to the banquet and decides to take the best seat. Then the host tells him to move down. That's embarrassing. What's Jesus say to do? Take the lowest seat, and then you'll be invited closer.

Jesus those who are last will be what? First. And the first will be last.

This is Kingdom thinking where the servant of all is the greatest in the Kingdom. Where we really do view others as greater than us and serve them as though they are greater than us.

Jesus gave us that example when he washed the disciples feet the night before he died. The God of the universe bending down as the lowest slave washing his disciples feet. All the disciples - including Judas. These disciples would all flee a little later that night. And Jesus says he's given us an example of what to do.

And if we're honest this is hard. Because of pride we really do think a lot of ourselves. We think we're better, smarter, wiser, more important than others. We like to put ourselves first, like to put others down. Complain about others because we feel mistreated.

I think humility is first in this list because the whole gospel revolves around the humbling of the Son of God. The King of the universe who humbled himself by taking on flesh, being born in the likeness of man, and died on a cross. That's **Phil 2**.

Jesus in **Mark 10:42-45:** "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

That's step 1 in walking worthy in the Kingdom: Humility.

Let me ask you: are you growing in humility? Do you see your sin as greater now than when you first became a Christian? Are you quicker now to elevate others or berate them? Not just in what you say, but in what you think about them?

Humility is the way we walk worthy.

B) Walk in gentleness. Read 1-2

If you want to walk in a manner worthy of Christ, worthy of the calling to which we have been called, you have to be gentle.

Harshness is the opposite of gentle.

Critical is the opposite of gentle.

Insulting, berating, irritation are all opposites of gentle.

When I think of gentle I think of a mother who is trying to smooth her baby. Actually Paul says makes that very analogy. **Turn to 1 Thess. 2:5-8.**

He says gentleness defined his ministry. **Read 5-8**

I love this because Paul really is a warrior in many ways. He's not afraid to preach the truth to those who are hostile to the gospel. He's been stoned, whipped, beaten, in danger everywhere. I often think he's got to be some kind of crusty Navy Seal who can just endure anything. But that's not how he conducts himself among the church.

He says he was gentle like a mom with her kids. Usually moms are gentle. Dads are rough and want their kids to toe the line. I know my wife is way more gentle than I am with our kids. Some of that is God's design.

But a lot of times I think we excuse our lack of gentleness. We think harshness is what's going to get things accomplished. We think criticism is what's going to move the needle. Maybe in the world. But not in the Kingdom.

Harsh, critical, complainers are last in the Kingdom.

Jesus himself was the model of gentleness. In **Matt 11:29** he says "take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and lowly in heart. And you will give you what?" Rest.

I'll be honest with you, I struggle with gentleness. Especially with kiddos. Sometimes it seems like things get done a lot faster and according to my expectation if I'm harsh. And you know what? Maybe it does. But it's not behavior worthy of the calling to which I've been called. Probably the number one thing I apologize for and ask forgiveness for from my kids is being too harsh.

I want to be gentle and give them rest. When I come to people in a tough situation, I want them to breath a sigh of relief. I want them to be thankful that, just like Jesus, they know I'll be gentle and lowly and give them rest

I don't want them to groan because it's one more problem they have to deal with.

Paul says that even when we correct our opponents we are to be gentle, because God might perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth. **2 Tim 2:25**

Gentleness is how we walk worthy.

Back in **Ephesians 4**, the next way is patience.

We have humility, we have gentleness.

C) We have patience. Read 1-2

Some of these qualities, you probably noticed are fruits of the Spirit from **Gal. 5**: Love joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self control.

Which makes sense, that the Spirit himself is working these qualities in us. Patience is one of those fruit of the Spirit that is part of Kingdom living.

I don't usually dress up all that much, and I rarely wear a tie except for weddings and funerals. But I appreciate people who do dress up. But I've always appreciated a really nice tie. Something that pops. Not too flashy, not too over the top. But noticeable and appropriate.

I think patience is like the tie of the Christian life. It might not be the most important piece of the suit, but I think it's often the thing people notice the most.

What is patience? Patience is suffering joyfully.

Maybe it's hardship that you're suffering though. Some kind of difficulty or frustration. It could be a delay in life that you don't want to deal with and maybe is costing you money or time or whatever.

But you deal with those sufferings - whatever they are - with joy. You gladly suffer because you know that Jesus suffered for you. You gladly wait because you know God is patient with you.

Romans 12:12: Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation.

Proverbs 14:29: Whoever is slow to anger - patient - has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.

If you're quick to get mad, if you're not patient, you're a fool. Fools get mad. Fools blow up when things don't go their way. The wise and understanding are slow to anger, just like God is slow to anger.

This is part of Kingdom walking.

D) We bear with each other in love. Read 1-2

Now, some of these qualities overlap. Here we have love, and we know that from **1 Cor. 13** love is patient. Patience is a critical part of love. But here the focus isn't on the love so much as it is on bearing with one another.

The word in the original means to "put up with" other people or "endure" each other (Arnold, Clint, Ephesians note on 4:2)

And I think this is especially important in the context of the gathered church because if we're honest we have a lot of differences with each other. Paul's going to go on and say that there is one faith, one baptism. **Read 4-6**

He says that to remind these guys of unity. Why is that? Because although we are one in Christ, part of the same body, have equal access to the Father through Jesus, we're often very different.

We have different personalities - some of you are extroverted, some of you are introverted. You don't like it when people like me come over and just strike up a conversation for no reason. "Why's this guy bothering me and when will he go away?"

Some of you like sports, some of you could go the rest of your lives never seeing an inflated ball again. "Why do people run for fun?"

Some of you work with your hands, some of you work with computers. We've got different interests, backgrounds, priorities, understandings, standards. You have different preferences.

Listen, God knew that when he saved you and when he brought you to this church. This church is a manifestation of the body of Christ. We've got hands and feet and ears and noses and eyes and all the rest. And maybe you don't jive well with the other body parts. Maybe they're not your cup of tea. Maybe they're not what you would have chosen.

But you know what? We're called to bear with each other in love. Not in aggravation, not in irritation or judgement. But in love.

The Christian community should be known as the group of people who are the weirdest group of people who have the greatest relationships with each other.

I remember being at Costco a few years ago when the Seahawks were in the playoffs and there were like 50 people standing around their Jumbotrons watching the game. And we're all there cheering and groaning together. We have nothing in common but a team we like. But we're not even interacting with each other - we're just watching a screen.

The Kingdom is different than that. It's deeper than that. We gather together as people who have nothing in common at all except Jesus. We orient our lives around Jesus and around each other. Not just for a game once in a while but every week. And we invest in each others' lives. Even when maybe we don't click very well.

Why? Because that's what it is to be part of the Kingdom.

I want to challenge you in our own church to go engage with people you don't normally hang out with. People you don't normally click with. It's okay to have close friends, it's okay to get along easily with some.

But I think the true test of Christian fellowship is how we get along with other believers we're not naturally inclined toward. Do we love them? Do we bear with them gladly and joyfully and sacrificially? Do they know we love them and do others see we love them?

When that happens, we're walking worthy.

Humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with each other.

E) Keep unity and peace. Read 3

This is critical to do in any situation.

We've all heard the stories of churches splitting over carpet color or who gets elected to be a deacon or whatever. People who are angry at anything the pastor does or some other person does.

Here, the context is Jewish and Gentile relations. Two groups of people who couldn't be further from each other. People who had always been at odds with each other and looked down on each other.

Now, they're one in Christ. And so Paul says "When you get a chance, try to stay unified."

Is that what he says? No.

ESV: Be eager to maintain unity. An eagerness to have the bond of peace.

NIV: Make every effort. Do everything you possibly can to get this done.

There's a fire that started over on 291 yesterday and quickly grew with the wind. We're sitting on the back patio yesterday and hear a helicopter fly overhead toward the fire. We look up flight radar and there's like 7 fire bosses, several helicopters and all kinds of other units dispatched.

They are making every effort to put this thing out. And as this guy is flying over I'm thinking they must be going through a lot of fuel for this thing. Why do they do that? Because the danger of not making every effort is death and destruction. Homes burned, people killed, devastation.

You know what the result is if we're not making every effort to eagerly to maintain unity and the bond of peace? It's devastation. It's destruction. Not to wood and brick, but to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

If we think there's a fire that needs to be put out in the congregation, if we think there's difficulty going on. We don't make some effort. We don't make a lot of effort.

What do we make? Every effort. All hands on deck - to maintain unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace for the glory of God.

Sound doctrine gives way to sound living where we walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which we've been called.

Pray

Benediction: Hebrews 13:20-21: Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.