

A Worthy Walk (Ephesians 4:1–13)
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Introduction

1. Ephesians is thought to be a circular letter written by Paul to the Gentile churches of Asia Minor.
 - a. Ephesus was the first and principal church in the region (Acts 19); thus, the name attached to the letter.
 - b. It was written when Paul was imprisoned in Rome (A.D. 60) because he was concerned that his circumstances would discourage these Gentile saints. *“So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you”* (3:13).
2. The purpose of the letter was to secure and stabilize the churches by affirming that the Gentiles had full standing as the people of God (his *mystery*).
 - a. Although formerly called *“uncircumcision”* (with no covenant standing, 2:11), they were *“brought near”* (given covenant standing, 2:13, 14). The result—
 - b. They were *“no longer strangers and aliens, but fellow citizens and members of the household of God”* (2:19).
3. This purpose was always God’s intention (3:4–6, 11).
 - a. It related to Paul’s apostleship and the reason for his present condition—*“a prisoner for Christ Jesus”* (v. 1).
 - b. *“For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea”* (Habakkuk 2:14; Isaiah 11:9, 10: *“In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.”*).
4. Not only has God a *purpose*, cosmic reconciliation, but also a *plan* to realize that purpose (2:18–22).
 - a. *“Through the church”* He caused *“to be known His manifold wisdom to rulers and authorities in the heavenlies”* (3:10)—to resolve the cosmic conflict.
 - b. These Gentile believers must not lose heart because of trials, particularly with respect to Paul (3:13); thus, Paul wrote the letter.
5. In light of his suffering, Paul prayed for them (3:14–20).
 - a. *“To be strengthened with power through his Spirit in [their] inner being so that Christ may dwell in [their] hearts through faith”* (vv. 15, 16a). In this way—
 - b. *“Rooted and grounded in love,”* (1) they would *“comprehend . . . what is the breadth and length and height and depth and* (2) [they would] *know [by experience] the love of Christ”* and, thus, be *“filled with all the fullness of God”* (3:19). *“Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen”* (3:20, 21). On this basis of God’s planned purpose

to get glory to Himself through the church, Paul appeals to the church to walk worthy of its calling in Christ.

I. The Calling

1. The call involves living out the gospel plan of cosmic reconciliation, sharing Christ's rule as priest-kings in the heavenly temple (2:18–22).
 - a. God has but one heritage—His people: “*But the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage*” (Deut. 32:8). “*You separated them from among all the peoples of the earth to be your heritage*” (I Kings 8:53). “*Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession*” (Psa. 2:8).
 - b. The means God used to establish this purpose was realized in the gospel by Jesus Christ (3:11, 12). “*But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one . . . that he might create in himself one new man. . . . And he came and preached peace [reconciliation] to you who were far off and peace [reconciliation] to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father*” (2:13–18).
2. The conduct expected of the called reflects the *responsibility* inherent in the rank and standing of priest-kings.
 - a. To walk with “*humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with each other in love*” (v. 2).
 - b. The appeal is urgent because it is kingdom business.
 - c. The focus is not *building*, but *maintaining* the kingdom through “*the unity of the Spirit in bond of peace [reconciliation]*” (v. 3), a bond easily broken by self-assertive pride.

II. The Hope

1. The drive and motivation for kingdom people to take responsibility for kingdom conduct is the one hope of their calling, revealing its centrality as emphasized by seven unifying things (vv. 4–6).
 - a. *One body* into which we are called to sacrificial service
 - b. *One Spirit* enabling supernatural obedience
2. The body expresses its hope through—
 - a. Allegiance and obedience to the *one Lord*
 - b. Conduct informed and guided by the *one faith* (biblical belief)
 - c. Belief confessionally declared in the *one baptism*
 - d. Trust in *one God*, Creator and sovereign “*over all and through all and in all*”
 - e. Depending on one “*Father*” as loving benefactor

III. The Gift

1. The power and ability to maintain kingdom conduct is owing wholly to the gift of Christ's grace (vv. 7–12).
 - a. These are grace-gifts that are generously given to every one of His people (v. 7).

- b. These grace-gifts are the awards of *victory* by Christ's own obedience to the Father (vv. 8, 9; Psalm 68:18).
- 2. There is a question of Paul's use of Psalm 68:18 (vv. 8, 9) and how it relates—"receiving" and "giving" in light of cosmic reconciliation.
- 3. This gifting aims at three co-ordinate needs:
 - a. Equipping the saints—
 - b. To do the work of ministry in order to—
 - c. Build up the body of Christ both spiritually and numerically (*cf.* 1 Thess. 5:11)

IV. The Goal

- 1. The goal of the calling is *unity* (oneness) of faith *in the bond of peace* (reconciliation, v. 3 *cf.* v. 13).
 - a. The reconciliation of peace has produced a "new humanity," a new dwelling place for God through the Spirit according to the eternal purpose of God realized in Jesus Christ (2:15, 19, 22; 3:11).
 - b. This unity is *of the Spirit*, but it is *maintained* as the saints walk worthy of their calling (4:1–3).
- 2. When Christ returns, He will realize fully what He inaugurated at the cross (2:11–22):
 - a. Fully functioning unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God
 - b. Mature personhood
 - c. The measure of the stature of Christ's fullness—believers will be as much like Him as creaturely possible.

Application

- 1. In light of the calling, Paul instructs believers in the last half of Ephesians to their responsibility—maintaining "*unity in the bond of peace.*"

Has the Spirit produced this unity in us? Is pride and self-protection preventing honest and transparent interaction between all members of the body?
- 2. Obedience requires that we honestly seek real repentance. It will cost us, but the sacrifice is both necessary and rewarding.