

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 4

“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

Walking Worthy of Our Calling

As we finished our study of chapter two last year we came to what I argued was the Apostle’s summary of God’s grand plan of salvation, describing all that God has done to save us and how God plans for us to walk in our new life in Christ!

Ephesians 2:8 “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

- I pointed out that as we came to study the rest of Ephesians, we would have a good deal of time to consider the works prepared for us to walk in as those who are now new creatures.

It is a pattern that we see in almost all of the Apostle Paul’s Epistles and Letters: He begins with right doctrine and then this leads to right living!

- Paul teaches us about faith & works and with both we must be so careful to keep them in the context of God’s grace & not fall prey to our own pride, a warning we see again in our morning text.

The Apostle calls us to walk worthy of the calling with which we are called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

So looking back again at verse 8 of chapter two we read: “8 “For by grace you have been saved through faith & that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God” We learned that this Grace is unmerited favor and we know that ALL such Grace is a gift from God!

- And since faith is the instrument that God uses to bring one to Christ we must ask the question about whether this saving faith is something in us or faith also a gift from God!

In other words, does Paul reference to God’s gift refer to our salvation or to the instrument of faith?

Now the Apostle’s entire focus up to that point had been on the Grace of God, so I think the emphasis here is on Grace, so what are we to do with faith?

- We learned to see this faith as part of the gift of Grace because it is God Who gives us the new hearts that can exercise faith and receive Jesus!

God proclaimed this clearly to the Prophet Ezekiel when He says, Ezekiel 36:26 “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.”

Now there should be no controversy here, but sadly we saw that the last gasp of human pride comes when some insist that our choice, our faith must play a significant role in salvation.

Our choices and our faith are in fact important, but they must always be seen in the full context of God's Grace which includes our new hearts! To illustrate this we turned the Book of Ecclesiastes, which clearly exposes the pride of man... We saw that it is very important to remember how this important book begins and ends:

Ecclesiastes 1:1 "The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. 2 "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher; "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." 3 What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun?"

- **Do you children remember what King Solomon meant when he writes "under the sun?"**
- **It means looking at any of the material world without God!**

That is important to know because when we come to the final verses we read at chapter 12 verse 12:

"Of making many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all.

14 For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil."

- **The whole point of Ecclesiastes is to show that all is vanity, or vapor without God: What King Solomon refers to as life under the sun.**

King Solomon shows the vanity of many things that can have great worth and purpose when they are seen properly under God: Wisdom -- Pleasure – Labor – Wealth – Honor

The same is true of faith: It is saving faith when it is under God and it is vanity when we think it as something that we give to God or exercise in our own strength without a new heart!

- **That is the important lesson we must remember as we move on with the Apostle Paul to the applications!**

And we saw a reference to applications immediately after those verses about salvation by Grace:

Ephesians 2:10 "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

- **We should notice that the same principle we learned from Ecclesiastes applies to both our salvation and our good works: Without God's help they are vanity!**

Back when Linda and I were young Christians, there were battles that raged in evangelical circles debating whether you could have Jesus as your Savior and not as your Lord.

- **Back then IF someone taught that a person who came to Jesus for salvation must then bow the knee to Jesus as Lord by living in obedience to His Commandments, they were often accused of adding works to salvation by grace! How could it be salvation by grace if works were involved?**

Today in some reformed circles, if you say that those who have faith will obey Jesus, doing the good works they were created to do, then you can be accused of denying the great reformation doctrine of salvation by faith alone.

To avoid such confusion we must always stress what the Apostle Paul teaches:

- **The gracious gift of salvation is the result of God's love & actions from start to finish!**

The Evangelical conflict over having Jesus as Savior or as Lord was a false dichotomy: You must have Jesus as Savior AND Lord!

- **And as reformers we must be unafraid to affirm that saving faith is an obedient faith that walks in the good works we were created in Christ Jesus to walk in!**

It is also important to point out that this does NOT conflict with the great reformation revival of the Biblical doctrine of justification by faith: Last week our Heidelberg questions & answers covered this very truth, which is why I suggested looking at the various proof texts as further study: I won't repeat all of them, but quickly review a few. Those Questions begin after teaching us about salvation by faith alone and then ask how this doctrine cannot but make men careless and profane? [explain]

The authors clearly answer by saying, by no means: for it is impossible that those, who are implanted into Christ by a true faith [saving faith, not a vain faith], should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness.

- Yes, we are to walk worthy of our calling in Christ Jesus!

Question 86 goes on to ask the next logical question: “Since then we are delivered from our misery, merely of grace, through Christ, without any merit of ours, why must we still do good works?” [what can we add to our salvation?] Their answer should remind us about what we are learning from Paul:

Answer . Because Christ, having redeemed and delivered us by his blood, [we are saved by Grace]

[Christ] also renews us by his Holy Spirit, after his own image; that so we may testify, by the whole of our conduct, our gratitude to God for his blessings, and that he may be praised by us; also, that every one may be assured in himself of his faith, by the fruits thereof; and that, by our godly conversation, others may be gained to Christ.”

- So, the good works we are to walk in show that we are thankful, bring praise to God, give us assurance of our salvation and help to gain others for Christ!
- The bottom-line: We are saved by Grace through faith, then empowered by the Holy Spirit to walk in such good works!

And that brings us back to our text from chapter four: ““I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 with all lowliness & gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

- So we are saved by Grace and we walk by Grace!

So now our text and the following chapters are going to call us to obedience and there is a dilemma similar to what I shared with regard to giving God glory last week:

- We are talking about something that is living and not just academic!

Just as I could not give you a list of do's and don't for having the praise of God continually on your lips, so it is hard to explain just what it means to walk with Christ as we are called to do. If it is just a long list of do's or don't, then all I have given you is legalism. And yet Jesus says that if we love Him we will keep His commandments!

- And yes, in the coming weeks and months we will see many of those commandments given by the Apostle Paul, expecting us to learn them and obey them!

So just how should we approach this walking worthy of our calling? I want to turn to a familiar Psalm to help us and expand a bit on the agricultural reference that is made there by King David.

To set the stage I want us to picture an active farm with fields and barns and lots and lots of work to be done.

- The owner of the farm has two sons and several animals to help him with the work that needs to be done.

He appreciates the work done by both, but treats them very differently:

His sons have worked with him from a young age and know almost instinctively what has to be done and can quickly take instruction from their father, often with just a glance or facial expression or gesture rather than a verbal command. The horses who labor with him are certainly a BIG help but they are guided by bits and bridles to carry out the tasks that must be done.

- **So which do you think we should strive to be when it comes to laboring in the Kingdom?**
- **Which would be walking worthy of our calling?**

That answer may seem simple, but keep that picture of the farm in mind as we see what King David shares in Psalm 32: “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered.

2 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit.”

- **That describes the man saved by Grace!**

David goes on to speak about his confession and repentance and how God protects us from life’s troubles. Then we read about His walk with God at verse 8:

“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye. 9 Do not be like the horse or like the mule, Which have no understanding, Which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, Else they will not come near you. 10 Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; But he who trusts in the Lord, mercy shall surround him. 11 Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous; And shout for joy, all you upright in heart!”

- **So what does it mean to walk worthy of our calling?**

It means to live a life where we are glad and rejoice in the Lord!

It means that we shout for joy because we know that our Lord Jesus has made us upright [which certainly includes giving glory to God as we learned last week!

Yes we are not to be the mules or horses that are led around the farm with bits and bridles [though God can and will use discipline if needed]...

Rather we are the sons who are guided by the eye of a loving Father, rejoicing in the work they are called upon to walk in as Sons of our loving Father!

Communion Meditation: Jeremiah 17

“12 A glorious high throne from the beginning

Is the place of our sanctuary.

13 O Jehovah, the hope of Israel,

All who forsake You shall be ashamed.

“Those who depart from Me

Shall be written in the earth,

Because they have forsaken Jehovah,

The fountain of living waters.”

14 Heal me, O Jehovah, and I shall be healed;

Save me, and I shall be saved,

For You are my praise.”