

Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians
Knowing Your Privilege in Christ
"The Calling of the Christian"
(Ephesians 4:1-16)

1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, **2** With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; **3** Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. **4** *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are 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. **7** But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. **8** Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. **9** (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? **10** He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) **11** And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; **12** For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: **13** Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: **14** That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; **15** But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ: **16** From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

OUTLINE

- (1) Live as you are called (v1-6)**
- (2) Serve as you are endowed (v7-16)**

INTRODUCTION

Our study is entitled "The Calling of the Christian" taken from Eph. 4:1-16. In the last three chapters, we have studied what is the church for *a church needs to understand from the very beginning what it is* so that it can know what direction it should be going.¹ We have been studying doctrines because doctrine is the basis for duty. We need to know that duty always flow out of doctrine. We do not live our lives anyhow. There can be no true living unless there are principles for it. There is no lifestyle unless there is a theology undergirding it. There can be no practice if there are no precepts.

As one pastor Cole puts it well, "Doctrine and duty are linked as closely as the flower and the stem", as closely as the branch to trunk, and the trunk to the roots.² Sound doctrine always must undergird godly living. Behaviour is always a response to precepts. Life is always a response to theology. If we focus on doctrine to the exclusion of practical application, you have not completed the process of learning. On the other hand, if you focus on practical application without the doctrinal foundation, you will fall easily into legalism and superficial Christianity. So, in almost all of Paul's letters, he first lays the

¹ John MacArthur, *The Master's Plan for the Church*, Moody, 2008, 134.

² John MacArthur, *The Lowly Walk Part 1*, 1978, 6.

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doctrinal foundation then he applies it to the problems of everyday life. What you believe affects how you behave.³

We have said that the church the church is God's people. A people (1) Chosen by the Father (2) Purchased by the Son and (3) Sealed by the Holy Spirit. The church is firstly a privileged people separated from sin unto holiness. Secondly, the church is a purchased people in intimate fellowship with the living and true God. And thirdly, the church is a protected people destined for heaven (v10-14). The church is a reflection of His Creator, pointing men and women to the living and true God.

Why do I have to repeat so many times? Because a true understanding of Christian doctrine leads to a desire to lead a godly life! It is the inner strength or motivation for duty.

You know why you do what you do. And now in this section from chapter 4 onwards, we shall see how we are to fulfill our calling as Christians.

There are two thoughts for your consideration, firstly, live as you are called (v1-6) and serve as you are endowed (v7-16).

(1) Live as you are called (v1-6)

1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called...

Paul makes a personal appeal to the Christians in Ephesus...verse 1. What does the Apostle Paul mean when he says, "walk worthy"? It means "live up to it". It is high time we live our lives according to our true identity, according to who we are.

The word "worthy" means "to give equal weight in their lives to doctrine and practice". There are two ideas to this word "worthy".

Firstly, is that of equal weight or balancing, think of a scale having two weights on both sides that are equal so that they balance.

Secondly, it has the idea of "becoming". Paul is saying, "I therefore the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk in a manner which is "becoming of" of the calling wherewith you are called. As Paul said in Philippians 1:27, "*Only let your conversation (your life) be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.*"⁴

The Christian calling begins at the moment of his conversion and continues throughout his life. Do not be discouraged if you find that you are still not balanced. Paul is urging us to do something about it. Do not lay back and stop growing.

Every Christian is a "called" person. But the "called" persons do not inevitably live a called life. Paul is saying, "Let your conduct correspond to your calling." Worthy means suitably, fittingly, agreeably. There should be no schism between our profession and our practice.

³ Steve Cole, Preserving Unity, 2008, 1.

⁴ D M Lloyd-Jones, Christian Unity, The Banner of Truth Trust, 2004, 25.

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Before we eat our meals, we pray, give thanks for the food that is placed before us because we want to acknowledge our Giver. We do so because we are who we are, a child of God. We do not simply rush through our prayer because we are embarrassed to pray in public.

So, Paul is saying, know who you are and live as you are called.

2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

How are we to walk? Paul is speaking here of cultivation of basic attitudes. The worthy walk is based on the right attitudes.

Paul is asking them to cultivate the right attitudes in your hearts.⁵ Since we are chosen by the Father and purchased by the Son and sealed by the Spirit, this is how we ought to live! As one pastor puts it, "He gives us 5 keys to a worthy walk. Five necessary keys and they are progressive." Paul adopted what Jesus taught, at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount in the Beatitudes.

We are to walk with lowliness, in humility, in poverty of spirit (Matthew 5:3 *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*) It means "having a humble opinion of one's self, a deep sense of one's moral littleness." We should not be puffed up but walk in a lowly manner. We could not create the world, we are just sinners saved by grace through faith.⁶ We are to gain victory over pride. Our prayer should be "Lord, teach me humility, teach me true humility." That's the word "lowliness." It means self-emptying. The gate of heaven is low, those that stands tall cannot enter. There is a self-awareness of our true self - depraved sinners. An attitude that cause us to deal or mourn for our sins.

Secondly, "Meekness", the word "meek" describes "an attitude of quiet, reverent and humble submission to the will and purpose of God." The quality of "meekness" is a gentle, quiet spirit of selfless devotion to God. It is an enduring and obedient spirit that is contented with one's lot in life as God has given. Such a one, Christ pronounces blessed. The opposite of meekness is self-will, a rebellious and complaining spirit.

The "meek" is described as one who quietly waits upon the LORD in times of hardship and adversity (Ps 37:9), frets not and envies not the wicked in his prosperity. He seeks to live his life God's way, not acting rashly but according to God's Word. The psalmist declares, "*the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace*" (Ps 37:11). God's peace abides and abounds in him. God promises to take care of his needs. He will have a place of refuge always on this earth. In the days of famine, he shall be satisfied. He will always have a place of service for his Lord while he lives and will reign physically on earth with Christ in the Millennium to come.

Thirdly, longsuffering, is the Greek word "*μακροθυμία*" transliterated as "*makrothumēō*", means long-tempered. It is defined a state of emotional quietness. In this context, it describes the believer as exhibiting patience, forbearance, longsuffering, slowness in avenging wrongs inflicted by others (Thayer Lexicon), as God is patient towards us. It is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. It is not a natural action of man but a supernatural action of the

⁵ John Mac Arthur, *The Lowly Walk Part 4*, 1978, 3.

⁶ D A Waite, *Ephesians – Preaching Verse by Verse*, Bible for Today, 2002, 101-102.

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Holy Spirit working in the believer. There is the other word, which means “*patience*” in the example of Job 5:11, to be patient under adverse circumstances.

Fourthly, love, forbearing one another in love, which means seeking the highest good for the other person. Not just to tolerate someone, not referring to the gritting of teeth or becoming in different.

How can that be done? The Apostle Paul elaborates the dos in Romans 12:9-21.

Romans 12:9-21 *Let love (agape) be without dissimulation (sincere, without hypocrisy, genuine). Abhor (to hate strongly) that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Fifthly, unity of the Spirit verse 3, *Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

Although true unity among believers already exists because of the mighty work of the Sovereign Spirit, we must work hard to preserve it. Harmonious relationships in our homes and in the church, will not happen automatically. At some point, your feelings will get hurt or you will hurt someone else’s feelings. There will be disagreements, sometimes over difficult issues. There will be personality clashes, when someone gets on your nerves. There will be different preferences, sometimes over minor matters, but sometimes over important things. To resolve these problems, we must understand how important unity is to our Lord. He calls us to walk in a manner worthy of our calling as saints. We must practice these qualities that preserve unity. And, we must exert a lot of effort to work through problems in a godly manner.⁷

In verses 4-6, Paul elaborates for us the 7 reasons for this unity.

4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are 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.

True Christian unity isn’t sharing a cup of coffee and discussing last night who won the match, but is bound up with our common bond with the Triune God.

There is one body... true unity is built on the truth that there is one body, the church, Jesus Christ is the Head (1:23; 2:16). And although the body has this fundamental unity as a body of God’s people, it also necessarily has diversity. There is room for differing

⁷ Steve Cole, Preserving Unity, 2008, 8.

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gifts, ministries and personalities in this one body. Each one comes into the body by experiencing the new birth.

and one Spirit...

Here we are referring to born again Christians having the new birth.

even as ye are called in one hope of your calling...

Paul is referring to the yet future aspect of our salvation, the second coming of Jesus Christ, when we will be changed totally to be like Christ and share His glory. In the Bible, hope is not uncertain, as we often use the term. We say, "I hope it doesn't rain tomorrow," but it is just a wish. But biblical hope is absolutely certain, but not yet realized.⁸

It is certain because God has promised it and He never fails to keep His promises. We just haven't experienced it yet at this point in time. Although mockers may scoff at the promise of Christ's coming, God is not slow about His promise (2 Pet. 3:3-4, 9). When He comes, we will be caught up to be with Him forever. Those who reject Him will face His wrath and judgment. As with the doctrine of the Spirit, so with matters of prophecy, there is division among Christians. But all genuine Christians are united on this one fact, that Jesus is coming back bodily in power and glory. It is the Holy Spirit who gives us hope as we believe in the promise of His coming (Rom. 15:13). This is the hope of our calling.⁹

5 One Lord...biblical unity is built on the truth that there is one Lord.

There is one Lord, Jesus Christ Himself. He "is our peace" (Eph. 2:14). Thus, all true biblical unity centers in the person and work of Jesus Christ, our eternal Lord.

If a person or a religious group denies what the Bible teaches about the Person of Jesus, that He is fully God and fully man, we are not in unity with them. If they deny His substitutionary death on the cross as the only means by which we can be reconciled to God, we are not one with them. If they deny the need to submit everything to Jesus as Lord and to live so as to please Him, we are not one with them. He is our Lord both by virtue of who He is, the sovereign Creator and Sustainer of the universe; and, by what He did, purchasing us with His blood on the cross. If someone claims to know Christ as Savior, but denies that He is their Lord, you need to challenge him on whether he truly knows Him as Saviour. At best, you cannot enjoy true fellowship with a professing Christian who by a disobedient life denies the lordship of Jesus Christ.¹⁰

one faith...biblical unity is built on the truth that there is one faith.

This faith is the body of doctrine found in the Old and New Testament. We need to make sure that we get our faith from the right Bible which in the English language is the King James Bible.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid, 6.

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For example, the modern versions have doctrinal errors which we do not want to follow because it is translated from the Greek Text that has 9900 words missing. If you have the wrong Bible, you have some places where false doctrine is found. Today, there is not one doctrine or one faith but there are many doctrines.¹¹

John 6:47 *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.* The New International Version and the Hew American Standard Bible leave out the important words “on me” because they follow the false Greek text Westcott and Hort. They follow this Gnostic heretical text from Egypt.¹² The NIV says, I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. They omit “on me”/ The Gnostics did not believe that Christ was necessary for salvation. If you are going to have one faith, you better have the right underpinning to that faith.

one baptism...true unity is built on the truth that there is one baptism.

Here it refers not to more water or less water but the Spirit’s indwelling in the believer at conversion.

6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Here the Father of all refers to the Father of all believers and not the Father of all people. That is the distinction of truth and error in our modernistic and liberal churches. These churches may say that God is the Father of all people, Christian and non-Christian.

In His omnipresent, the entire Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, indwells all those who are redeemed and saved by God’s grace. Because God is omnipotent and omnipresent, He can do all.¹³

Our first thought “live as you are called” secondly, “serve as you are endowed”.

(2) Serve as you are endowed (v7-16)

7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

God gives gifts according to the “measure of the gift of Christ.” Every saved person has been given a “gift” from Christ. God gives you some special thing that you can do that no one else can do. This is not a natural gift. It is a supernatural gift. The word “measure” refers to an instrument to measure something. There are 12 kinds of gift which are spoken of in 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4 and Romans twelve. What is your gift?

Once you have your gift, exercise it. Do not just sit idly by. Whether it is your gift of giving, or your gift of praying, or your gift of ministry, or your gift of helping, use it! There are those who would write a card to encourage another person, it is a gift.

How do we know if it’s the Lord’s leading to go ahead, it is according to the Scriptures!

8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. 9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above

¹¹ D A Waite, Ephesians – Preaching Verse by Verse, Bible for Today, 2002, 105.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 107.

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all heavens, that he might fill all things.) 11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

William MacDonald said well, "4:7 The doctrine of the unity of the Body of Christ has a twin truth, namely, the diversity of its members. Each member has a particular role assigned. No two members are alike, and no two have exactly the same function. The part to be played by each one is assigned according to the measure of Christ's gift, that is, He does it as He sees fit. If Christ's gift here means the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 17; Acts 2:38, 39), then the thought is that the Holy Spirit is the One who assigns some gift to every saint, and who also gives the ability to exercise that gift. As each member fulfills his appointed work, the Body of Christ grows both spiritually and numerically.

4:8 In order to assist each child of God to find and fulfill his function, the Lord has given some special gifts of ministry, or service to the church. These should not be confused with the gifts mentioned in the previous verse. Every believer has some gift (v. 7), but not everyone is one of the gifts named in verse 11: these are special gifts designed for the growth of the body.

First, we find that the Giver of those special gifts is the risen, ascended, glorified Lord Jesus Christ. Paul quotes Psalm 68:18 as a prophecy that the Messiah would ascend to heaven, would conquer His foes and lead them captive, and, as a reward for His victory, would receive gifts for men.

4:9 But this raises a problem! How could the Messiah ascend to heaven? Had He not lived in heaven with God the Father from all eternity? Obviously, if He was to ascend to heaven, He must first come down from heaven. The prophecy of His Ascension in Psalm 68:18 implies a prior descent. So, we might paraphrase verse 9 as follows: "Now when it says in Psalm 68 'He ascended' — what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth."

We know that this is exactly what happened. The Lord Jesus descended to Bethlehem's manger, to the death of the cross, and to the grave. The lower parts of the earth have sometimes been taken to refer to hades or hell. But that would not fit in with the argument here: His Ascension necessitated a previous descent to earth but not to hell. In addition, the Scriptures indicate that Christ's spirit went to heaven, not hell, when He died (Luke 23:43, 46)."

The gift of apostles and prophets are foundational gifts before the Bible is completed. There is no need for further revelation when the Bible is completed.

Rather, we believe today we have "evangelists" ones who proclaim and preach the Christ.

William MacDonald in the Believers Bible Commentary said well, "Evangelists are those who preach the good news of salvation. They are divinely equipped to win the lost to Christ. They have special ability to diagnose a sinner's condition, probe the conscience, answer objections, encourage decisions for Christ, and help the convert find assurance through the word. Evangelists should go out from a local church, preach to the world, then lead their converts to a local church where they will be fed and encouraged."

Pastors and teachers are still here. Some combine those two. The pastor is one who shepherds the flock. He is to shepherd those God has given him for care. The Lord Jesus

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Christ is our Shepherd. We are His sheep, but the preachers and undershepherds are in charge of the local church which is their flock.

The tasks of the shepherd are many – to watch for enemies trying to attack the sheep, to defend the sheep from attackers, to heal the wounded and sick sheep, to find and save lost or trapped sheep who are out of the fold and to love the sheep. The shepherd is to love them and share their lives and so earn their trust.¹⁴

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

The word “perfecting” speaks of bring to spiritual maturity. William MacDonald described well, “The gifts are given to perfect or equip all Christians to serve the Lord, and thus to build up the body of Christ.”

To be continued...

¹⁴ Ibid., 111.