



The Christian Walk Ephesians 4

Introduction

Ephesians is uniquely the epistle of the church. Jesus said He would establish the church upon Peter's confession, "*You are the Christ*" (Matthew 16:18), and the church was born on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41). After Pentecost the church is not mentioned as much as one might think. "It is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, and Colossians 1:18, 24; 2:19 but the doctrine itself is amplified and enlarged upon only in Ephesians" (Synthetic Bible Studies, James M. Gray).

The duty of the church is to "*walk*" worthy of her calling as the proper response to being chosen, sanctified, and given glory. When Paul uses the word "walk", he is referring to daily conduct; to the way people live their everyday lives.

The church is both a body whose head is Christ, and also a building, a *holy temple* (Ephesians 2:21), made up of individuals who, having been chosen, are sanctified and equipped. As members of this body, and *living stones* (1 Peter 2:5) in this building, our conduct, or walk, is as important as our calling. The Father chose and called us, Jesus saved us, and the Holy Spirit sanctifies us (see 1 Peter 1:1-2). Our part is to choose daily to walk worthy of our high calling. Chapters 4 and 5 of Ephesians describe how the Christian should walk. They fit between our wealth (Ephesians 1-3) and our warfare (Ephesians 6). Ephesians 4 describes the Christian's walk as "*worthy*" (4:1) and contrasts it with the futile walk of the rest of the world.

Outline of Ephesians 4

- I. A Worthy Walk - Ephesians 4:1-16
- II. A New Walk - Ephesians 4:17-32

This lesson covers the first two points; a worthy walk, which is a new way of walking.

I. A Worthy Walk - Ephesians 4:1-16

A. Paul's Plea - Ephesians 4:1

1. As a prisoner of the Lord

Paul again mentions his status as a prisoner, not to seek sympathy but to emphasize the seriousness of his words.

2. A walk worthy of our calling

The first three chapters of Ephesians, which are the first half of the letter, deal with doctrine. We need to know the basis of our belief, to know, literally, where we stand. The last half of the letter deals with duty, practicing our beliefs in conduct and behavior. "Walk" translates the Greek word "peripateo". In Paul's letters, it is always used figuratively to mean "the whole round of the activities of the individual life" (Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, W.E. Vine). A worthy walk is a balanced walk, having equal weight. In other words, the weight of our walk should balance the weight of our belief. Duty should equal doctrine and walk equal talk. There is an old saying, "Those who talk the talk, should walk the walk."

B. Characteristics of a Worthy Walk - Ephesians 4:2-3

1. Lowliness and gentleness - 4:2

Lowliness is the same as humility, *a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God* (1 Peter 3:4). *God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble* (1 Peter 5:5). Humility is the opposite of pride, which God abhors (Amos 6:8). Gentleness flows out of humility and embodies meekness and self-control. Gentleness does not resist God or insist upon its own way.

2. Longsuffering or patience - 4:2

If humility and gentleness yield to God's leading, patience is the willingness to wait His time. Are you a "now" person? If so, you need patience. God has His own timing and He is seldom, if ever, in a hurry. When we wait for God's timing we have the joy of seeing our needs met in God's perfect way.

3. Bearing with one another in love - 4:2

Humility, gentleness, and patience are worked out in our lives as we love one another continuously and unconditionally.

4. Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit - 4:3

Paul has taught that all believers have been brought into one body, built up as a holy temple with Christ as the chief cornerstone. And this holy temple is the

dwelling place of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:20-22). As living stones in God's holy temple, we are to *stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the gospel of faith* (Philippians 1:27).

C. Charter of the Church - Ephesians 4:4-6

The most basic Old Testament creed which all Jews had to memorize and accede to is Deuteronomy 6:4, *Hear O Israel, the LORD our God is one*. The New Testament creed and charter may have been Ephesians 4:4-6.

*There is one body and one Spirit,
just as you were called in one hope of your
calling;
one Lord
one faith
one baptism
one God and Father of all, who is above all, and
through all, and in you all.*

One baptism, whether referring to baptism by and in the Holy Spirit or water baptism, is all one. Water baptism is the outward symbol of an inward reality. The inward reality usually takes place at a different time from the water baptism. A believer is baptized once by the Holy Spirit and testifies to their faith by the symbol of water baptism. Otherwise, one baptism has no meaning.

D. Gifts - Ephesians 4:7-11

1. Grace as the means - 4:7

But to each one of us grace was given. Everything we have is given to us by the grace of God. He does not owe us a thing. Nor is there anything we can accomplish or earn apart from the grace of God. He gave us life and He gives us health, strength, and resources. Jesus said, *Without Me you can do nothing* (John 15:5).

2. Giver as the supplier - 4:8-10

a. *Therefore* - verse 8

Why are believers given grace? Because God has gifts to give us through grace. Paul's teaching on the gifts begins with "*Therefore*". He refers to Psalm 68:18, *You have ascended on high, you have led captivity captive, you have received gifts among men*. Who ascended on high? Only Jesus Christ our Lord has ascended.

b. Ascent preceded by descent - verse 9

Paul makes certain we understand the One who ascended is the same One who first descended to earth.

Note: There may be other meanings such as His burial beneath the earth, or even His descent into "paradise" in

the time between His death and resurrection, as some interpret verse 9, linking it with 1 Peter 3:18-20.

c. Ascent far above all the heavens - verse 10

Christ ascended to heaven as a returning conqueror, *that He might fill all things*. Christ led captivity, or our bondage to sin, captive to Himself. He was conqueror over it. In the role of conqueror, He distributes gifts to His "captives" who are now His servants. His gifts **to** people turn out to be gifts **of** people.

3. Gifts for the equipping of the saints - 4:11-12

a. *Apostles*

He Himself gave some to be these specially called and equipped people. The term apostle means "sent one" and usually refers to Christ's chosen twelve apostles, all of whom had seen Him risen from the dead.

b. *Prophets*

The word "prophet" means "one who speaks forth or proclaims a divine message" (Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, W. E. Vine). Many people believe the gifts of apostles and prophets have ceased, given only for the first-century church while the Bible was being completed.

c. *Evangelists*

Evangelists proclaim the gospel of salvation to unbelievers. Like obstetricians, who bring the newborn into the world, evangelists bring newborns into the church.

d. *Pastors and teachers*

The word "pastor" means "shepherd", one who guides and feeds the flock. Like pediatricians who guide the growth and development of individuals, pastors and teachers shepherd and nurture individuals in the church.

e. Other lists of gifts

Paul mentions what are called the "functional gifts". However, this is not the only list of gifts. Romans 12:6-8 gives the "ministering gifts" to minister to one another, and 1 Corinthians 12: 8-9 lists the "equipping gifts" for God's servants to function and minister. Such distinctions may be helpful, although artificial and man-made. All gifts are intended for service to one another.

E. Goals - Ephesians 4:12-16

Paul explains Christ's purpose in giving us these wonderful gifts. There are five points:

- *For the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry*
- *For the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*
- *That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men in cunning craftiness*
- *That believers may grow up in all things unto Him who is the head--Christ*
- *That every part of the body might do its share, causing growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*

II. A New Walk - Ephesians 4:17-32

Believers are not to live the way of the world but are called to live as new men and women, *created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness* (4:24).

A. The World's Walk - Ephesians 4:17-19

"Gentiles" in verse 17 refers to all unbelievers, those who have *no hope* and are *without God in the world* (Ephesians 22:12). Paul describes the way these worldly people conduct their lives or "*walk*". It is the way we all walked before we came to Christ.

- They walk *in the futility of their mind*. Paul wrote in Romans 1:21, *although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts*. "As far as spiritual and moral issues are concerned, their rational processes are distorted and inadequate" (The MacArthur Bible Commentary, John MacArthur).
- Their *understanding [is] darkened*.
- They are *alienated from the life of God, because of ignorance*. They are separated from God by their unbelief and are ignorant of God's truth.
- They are *past feeling*. Their sin leads to increasing indifference to moral and spiritual things and insensitivity to God and their fellow human beings.
- They *have given themselves over to lewdness.... and....all uncleanness*. John MacArthur uses the term "behaviorally depraved" to describe their "succumbing to sensuality" and loss of moral restraint (The MacArthur Bible Commentary).
- They are greedy. John MacArthur notes that greediness is inseparable from impurity and is a form of idolatry. See Ephesians 5:5 and Colossians 3:5.

B. The Walk Learned in Christ - Ephesians 4:20-32

1. Put off - 4:22

Believers do not walk in worldly ways learned by ungodly example and deceitful teaching. Believers have heard the truth and been taught the truth. Believers have *learned Christ*, so we are called to *put off* the old habits. To accomplish this requires being *renewed in the spirit of your mind*, having a willing spirit to cease old habits and learn new ones.

The corrupt habits of the old nature gratify lusts but are deceiving because succumbing to them demands more and stronger gratification until habits become an addiction. Old habits are put off by learning Christ, humbly allowing His Holy Spirit to teach and renew the spirit of our minds. We must choose to agree with God that the old habits must go and new ones be adopted. The old habits are listed in 4:25-31: lying, giving Satan an opening, stealing, corrupt talking, bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking, and the underlying motive, malice.

2. Put on - 4:24

Being *renewed in the spirit of your mind* (4:23) necessitates replacing the discarded habits with new ones, or the old will return (Luke 11:25). There are five replacements listed in this passage.

- Stop lying and tell the truth.
- Turn from uncontrolled anger to self-control.
- Do not steal but work for your needs and give to others. (This may include stealing time from your employer or manipulating others which often advances your own interests at another's expense.)
- Use words of grace to edify rather than harmful words that tear down.
- Put away all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking, and malice and *be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as Christ forgave you*.

In short, we are not to *grieve the Holy Spirit* by continuing to sin. The Holy Spirit secured eternal salvation for each and every believer by indwelling and preserving us for the day of redemption, the day of Christ's return.

Applications

1. Does your walk balance your talk? How much does your behavior match what you claim to believe?
2. What old habits do you need to put off?
3. What new and godly actions will you begin practicing today? With practice, these positive actions will soon replace the old habits.