

Ephesians 4 (Part 1): 1-3 • The Character of a Worthy Walk

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Calvary Chapel Ontario

Ephesians chapter 4 verses 1 through 3. Follow along as I read these verses here, and then we'll pray and get into this just a bit. Paul writes,

“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (ESV)

I'm going to have you stop there. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, thank you so much for your Word. We pray, Father, that as we just dig into these verses for a little bit, that you would speak to our hearts and give us insight and understanding into how we can understand them and apply them also to our lives. We ask it in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, amen.

Once before in this letter of Ephesians, Paul has made mention of the fact that he was writing to them from prison. He was in a Roman prison at this time. And we discussed his being a prisoner there of Jesus Christ in an earlier message. But this time, Paul is now going on to speak of those who are reading the letter, and he talks to them about their calling.

You might have noticed that in these verses, and he speaks of the calling to which they have been called. And since Paul is writing this letter to Christians in general, this is our calling. He's talking about our calling, right? Our calling in the Lord. This applies to all of us. And so, that means that you and I have a calling to which we have been called.

I always love to look at people's faces when I say that because there's usually a blank sort of thing going on because we don't normally think of our lives as having a calling.

We talk about pastors having a calling, like they got called into the ministry or something like that, but the Bible says that every single Christian has a calling, and that's an important thing to remember because we're living in a time when

the enemy has pretty successfully convinced a lot of people in this world that they really have no purpose in this world.

And in fact, their lives are really nothing more than the result of some sort of a meaningless sequence of evolutionary events. That means that you're a... you're an accident. I mean, there's no real reason why you're here other than the fact that things came together randomly in a sequence of events that was practically impossible to think about. But yet, it happened somehow, and now you're here, and your life is meaningless.

There's really no purpose to your life except, well, I'm just going to try to be happy as best I can because when it's over, it's over.

The fact of the matter is the Bible tells us the exact opposite. It says that you have been called with a calling, that you have been called with a purpose. That's the point of that. If God called you, that means he's got a purpose behind that calling, you understand? And if there's a purpose, then there's a reason for you to be here.

It's more than just making yourself happy and living to please yourself. There's more to it than that. And what is our calling? God comes along and tells us you have a calling. Wonderful. What is it? Our calling, Christians, is to reflect the very character and the heart of Jesus. Now, can I explain something very quickly here before we move on?

When we talk about a calling, when we talk about reflecting the heart of Jesus in our calling, right? I'm not talking to you about something that you have to just do by your own strength. I'm talking about, when we talk about reflecting Jesus in the world, we're talking about something that we can only do by the power of God. Please understand that.

You know how sometimes you'll see a commercial or you'll see something on TV that'll say, don't try this at home. Well, this is one of those passages in Scripture where it's like, don't try this by yourself. This is only when Paul talks to you and I about our calling to reflect Jesus; he's talking about something that can only be done in the power of the Holy Spirit.

I'm going to say that at the outset. All right? And so that you understand that, let me show you how Paul explained this very thing to the believers in Rome when he wrote a letter to them. I'll put this on the screen from Romans 8:29.

Romans 8:29 (ESV)

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers,

It says, “*For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined (look at this) to be conformed to the image of His Son (why?), in order that (we) he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*”

Paul says that you and I have been predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son. That's our calling, to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. And it's, believe me, a very powerful calling.

It's a very weighty calling. In case you thought you were going to get off easy today, no, this is a very weighty thing for God's Word to say to you and I. Okay, here's your calling guys, it's to be conformed to the image of Christ and to portray that image to a lost and dying world.

Well, so here's what Paul says about this, he says in verse 1 again, if you look with me in verse 1, “*I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.*” Now, this is very important. He says, you and I are to walk, and that means to live out our lives.

By the way, the word, walk is something that is used a lot here in the Book of Ephesians. But to walk out our Christian life means to live it out in our daily interactions with people, business, you name it. It's just how we live our lives.

What is Paul saying? He says, I urge you then to walk out your Christian life in a way that is worthy of the calling. I know that, worthy, that word, makes a lot of you people really uncomfortable. In fact, it's the, W word. And it's, to some, the nastiest word that probably was ever created. They hate it because deep down they know they're not worthy before God.

And I actually hear this from people, from time to time. I've had people actually come up to me after a service and say, Pastor Paul, I really want to accept Jesus, but I just feel like I'm not worthy. And I always tell them, the reason you feel unworthy is because you're unworthy. We're all unworthy. None of us are worthy to receive Jesus. Okay, let's get over that. There's not one single person here who has done enough, been enough, whatever, to be worthy to receive his love.

But Paul isn't talking here when he uses the word, worthy about being worthy to be saved. In fact, he's not even talking about being saved here. He's talking to

people who are already saved. And he's saying to those people, now that you are saved, live a life that is worthy of the calling that God has placed upon your life.

Now, what's interesting about the word, worthy here in this passage is that the Greek word means, get this, of equal weight. Isn't that interesting? Particularly in light of the fact that we just said a moment ago that it's a very weighty thing to be called to reflect Jesus in our culture.

It's a very heavy thing, and yet this word, worthy means of equal weight. Paul is saying, let your life be of equal weight to your calling. You with me? Let the life you live be of equal weight to the weightiness of your calling.

Now, what does he mean when he says, let your life be worthy of that weighty calling? Well, he outlines it in verse 2. Look with me there, verse 2 once again. He says, “...with all humility and gentleness, with patience (obviously, those things are all bound up in), bearing with one another in love, (and then) eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

So, he lists basically 4 things here. Let me put them up on the screen for those of you that take notes. This is helpful for you, I know. He's talking about:

- humility
- gentleness
- patience
- eagerness to maintain unity

Let's take a look at these very quickly.

First, he encourages **humility**. Guys, humility, what is it? It's not what some people think. When some people think of humility, they think of having kind of a being down on themselves. It's people who go, oh, I'm really nothing, I'm nobody, and I really can't do it. That's not humility. In fact, that's probably false humility, if anything.

Humility is how you and I see ourselves in light of God and his word, okay. In fact, I find this interesting, I looked up the word, humility in my Greek dictionary, and I found out that it is derived from a root word that means, to rein in, or, to curb, which is interesting in light of the fact that the world that you and I live in.

If you watch the Disney channel, you can see this, but the world that you and I live in is constantly trying to get you and I to focus on who we are. Who you

are, you've got to please yourself. It's all about self, right? Well, humility, from a biblical definition, means to rein in that which naturally happens in our lives. Because, guys, please understand, I pick on the Disney channel just because they're very good at portraying what the world thinks is important.

But please understand, it's just what's in our sinful nature, that's all. And that means it's in all of us. What is in all of us is to make a big deal out of who we are. Okay? That's in you and me so the word, humility, comes from this Greek root word that means, to rein it in, to curb that which naturally flows out of us, which is that desire to want to be bigger than I really am, to inflate who I really am. Humility sees myself, or is the ability, I should say, to see myself as God sees me.

And that's an important thing for us because when God shows us who we really are—oh, let me put it this way. I've had people try to tell me who they think I really am, and it's always discouraged me. I've also tried to tell people who I think they were, and it ended up discouraging them too.

When God communicates to you and I who we really are, it's not discouraging, but it is humbling. Okay, God has this way of communicating things to us that don't flatten all four of our tires, but they do give us a true understanding. He gives us an understanding of who we really are in Him. And that's something that we all need to do.

You know, you guys have read through the gospels—a great example is Peter. What a wonderful character Peter is, but he thought more of himself than was true. And he was the one who was always making these braggadocios claims. And the very night that Jesus was betrayed, Jesus told all the disciples that they were all going to desert him that very night.

And Peter said, no, no, no, no, not me. I am ready tonight to go to my death for you. And Jesus said, are you really? Actually, before morning, before the rooster even crows signaling morning, you will have already denied three times that you even know me. Well, Peter was like, no, no, no. (Matthew 26:31-35)

Why did he disagree with Jesus? Because he saw himself in a light that was self-inflated. He saw himself as being more important, well stronger, and so forth than he really was. And Jesus needed to allow him that night to go through a series of events that were going to reveal the real Peter. And what He said to Peter was, let me tell you something here bud, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. And I'm giving him permission because you desperately need to see who you really are. (Luke 22:31-32)

And when Peter saw who he really was, a humility entered into his soul that would now guide him for the rest of his years to be an incredible pillar in the church. But you see, Peter desperately needed to know who he was, but when he found out who he really was, the Bible says he wept bitterly. (Matthew 26:75)

He wept bitterly. Just the realization, this is me, I can do this. I can actually deny my Lord. I can do it. It's in me to do it. He saw himself as he really was, and it broke him. But you know what? He needed to be broken. He was like a wild stallion that needed to be broken. And many of us are the same way.

We need to have that humility to see ourselves in the proper light of who we really are. How do we do that? Well, we do it through His Word. There's something about the Bible, reading the Word of God, it becomes a mirror through which we see who we really are.

Doesn't that happen to you when you read the Bible? When you're looking into the word, don't you see, you read it and you go, ugh, busted. I mean, that sometimes that'll even cause us to want to close our Bible and not open it because I don't really like always that feeling of being busted, being shown who I am with all my warts and wrinkles, because I got a lot of them, spiritually speaking and so forth personality speaking.

But I need, and you need, we need to see ourselves, and we do that through the mirror of God's Word, and He communicates to us things that are essential to our understanding who we are, and that humility that results not only changes how we see ourselves, but it changes how we see others.

Now, this is interesting. Here's what the world says, you've got to learn to love yourself before you can love others. That's the mantra of the world. It is a lie from the pit of hell. You want to know the key to really loving and treating others properly? It's having a proper understanding of who you are in the light of God's purpose for your life.

And when you see yourself as you are in the light of God's glory and revelation, you not only see yourself differently, you see other people differently. And you realize they're sinners just like you, and you begin to treat them with a new compassion and a new open-heartedness. And you begin to look at them and say, you know what, we're the same. You know, you're a mess up just like me and I love you, sort of a thing.

Next, Paul encourages **gentleness**. Your Bible may use the word, meekness. What is that? Biblical gentleness is now how we respond to people when we feel attacked. Have you ever been attacked? That's a dumb question, isn't it? Every single one of us has felt attacked at one point of our lives or many more.

But we're talking here when Paul talks about gentleness, he's talking about the ability, listen to me, to suffer injury without becoming angry or resorting to revenge or becoming bitter, which we naturally do.

Our natural inclination when we are hurt by other people is to become angry. I don't want you in my life anymore. I don't want to see you, hear from you. I don't want anything about you in my life anymore. That's my natural tendency. It's this tendency to want to protect myself from any further hurt.

But Paul is encouraging you and I to be gentle around others. And he says that when we do this, we're living a life worthy of our calling. In other words, of equal weight with our calling.

Can I just remind you, when Jesus said about Himself? Let me put this up on the screen from Matthew chapter 11. Jesus said,

Matthew 11:29 (ESV)

"...I am gentle and humble in heart..."

"...I am gentle and humble in heart..."

There's the first two words we've looked at here already. Jesus said, I am humble and I'm also gentle. And again, that gentleness means you can hurt me and I won't lash back at you. I can suffer injury at your hands and still care about you as an individual and still even love you.

Do you guys get, now, why I said earlier, don't try this at home? Don't try this in your flesh. Don't try to—oh, don't try to be a good Christian. You've got to have the Holy Spirit living in you and empowering you to do this kind of stuff.

To be able to look in the eye of somebody who just hurt you, and to say, I love you, and I forgive you, and I choose not to respond out of revenge, and bitterness, and anger. That's God, you guys! That's not a human type of reaction.

That's a godly reaction, and it happens because the very one who made that statement, we looked at a moment ago in Matthew chapter 11, is now residing inside of you, those of you who have come to faith in Christ.

That very one who made that statement, I am humble, I am gentle. That character is now residing in you. And now you can say, I can do that through Him. I can do, in fact, all things through Him, through Christ, who gives me strength, right? That's why Paul made that statement, because he knew that residing in him was a power that transcended his own ability to live and to respond to people.

But see, so often you and I are focused on our inability. We'll say something like, you'll hear people say, well, I'm just one of those people, if somebody crosses me, man, I just let them have it. Somebody gets mad at me, if somebody says something to me that's hurtful or whatever, I just can't help myself. I'm just—I just go at them like, wow, this is me. Thankfully God loves me.

Well, the fact of the matter is, we're not supposed to focus on our inability and weaknesses. We're supposed to focus on His strengths that now live within us. And now I can do all things through Him who gives me strength.

The third characteristic is **patience**. And I'll probably hear a collective groan. Patience is one of those things we don't necessarily like to think much about because very few of us have it. The New King James Bible uses the word, long-suffering here for those of you that have that particular Bible, and this refers to how we respond to the failures, mistakes, and irritations of others.

Do you see what Paul's doing here? Humility is how we see ourselves. And then we come to this gentleness, which is how we respond when we're hurt. And then we come to this third characteristic of patience or long-suffering, which is how we respond when we see other people fail or when they get under our skin.

This word patience literally means to endure with your temper intact. How do you like that? To endure with your temper intact. I'm not asking for a show of hands, but how many of you have a short fuse? I get it. I know what that's all about, and we probably have differing levels or lengths of fuse depending on what we're going through in life. I might have a long fuse for some things and a very short fuse for others.

The fact of the matter is, I need to walk in patience. But this is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in my life and in your life when other people bug us. And believe me, people bug us. Sue and I have been married for 40 years, and I have had 40 years to bug the heck out of her.

And believe me, I've done it. And you know what? You're not going to bug anybody more than your spouse. Because you're living closest to that person. I

always like to think of it as like a dance. Whoever you dance the closest with, that's the person whom you're going to step on their feet, right? Just because you're dancing. And in life, you will be pushed to the end of your patience by the person who you live the closest with and other people as well.

And Paul says that when you and I walk in a supernatural work of patience, we are living a life that is of equal weight to our calling. And guys, if you're feeling condemned right now because you're not a very patient person around other people when they mess up. Join the group. We all feel that way, but that's because the reason you failed is that you attempted to do it in your flesh and your flesh will always fail.

Paul wrote, in my flesh dwells no good thing, and that means there's no patience in my flesh. (Romans 7:18) You know what my flesh wants to do? aaak! It wants to cut people off. When somebody does something, and when I'm driving in traffic, or somebody says something stupid or hurtful or just lame, my initial response is like, dude, grow up. Right? That's in my flesh, and it's, don't look at me that way. It's in yours, too.

You guys look at me like, right? It's all about every single thing, we want to look, and if we said everything that went through our heads. Yeah, you guys know what that's all about, but we hold our tongue sometimes. But inside our heart, we're boiling because it's like, I don't believe how stupid that was. Well, when we respond differently, which Paul, by the way, refers to as bearing with one another in love, we're living a life that is of equal weight to our calling.

So, oh, I got to tell you this story. I read this story of Harry Ironside, great Bible teacher, commentator, he's with the Lord now. He used to tell a story about a friend of his by the name of George. And George was a man who struggled with his temper. And every so often, George would just flip his lid and somebody would say something or do something, and he'd just fly off the handle.

But Harry Ironside told how George could always be set right by somebody coming up to him and asking him a simple question. And that question was, George, is this the old you or the new you? And he said that George would actually, at the sound of that question, be brought quickly to tears. He was a man of a soft heart, and he would say, it's the old me. And I need to bring the old me to the cross, that it might be crucified there with my Lord.

And I think that's just a wonderful question that we could all, ask ourselves when the old... Well, sometimes we don't know, it's the old sin nature that's responding. But when we're responding to the irritations and the mistakes of

other people, we need to ask ourselves the question, is this the new me or the old me? Is this the new Christ-like image that God is working in me? Or is this the old Paul? The old stinky, rotten, corrupted me?

You know what, most of the time it's the old stinky, rotten, corrupted me. And I need to ask that question honestly and answer it honestly. So that I can bring that to the Lord. And so that I can begin to live my life in a way that is of equal weight to my calling.

The final characteristic is eagerness to maintain **unity**. But would you look at that verse again there in your Bible in verse 3? I want you to notice what kind of unity Paul is talking about here. Notice in verse 3, he says, “...*eager to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.*” Guys, that's significant when he says the unity of the spirit. He's not talking about the unity of the body of Christ.

Do you know that we're not to maintain the unity? We're not told to maintain the unity of the body of Christ. That's something he's going to take care of. We're not even told to maintain the unity of Calvary Chapel. What we're talking about here is the unity of the spirit. What does that mean?

It means that there is a work that the Holy Spirit has already done to join us to one another. Although we may look different to one another, we may be different in some ways. You may not go to the same church as this person that you're maybe talking to. You may not sing the same worship songs. You may not have served at the same VBS this last week. But the fact of the matter is you've been brought together by the spirit, and there is a unity that He has forged in you with this person that is undeniable. And we are united and joined as one through the spirit.

Because here's the point. You will go to a different church than some people. You will sing different worship songs than some people, and you will serve at a different VBS, although it won't be as good as ours. But that doesn't matter because through the Spirit, you're still one because He has made you one.

There's this Bible teacher that I love to read who was telling about a trip he was making by train, many years ago, from Minnesota to Southern California, and it took days to get there. Well, on the first day of his trip, it was morning, and he took out his Bible and he talked about having his morning portion, that was his Bible reading for the day. And he noticed this German woman who was walking over to him, and he knew she was German because of her thick German accent.

But she came to him, and she said, what is that you have there? Is that a Bible? And he said, yeah, that's my Bible. She said, hold on, I'm going to go get mine. And so she went back to her thing, and she came back with her Bible, and a little bit later, a Norwegian man saw them reading their Bibles, and he insisted that he too be allowed to come and join in on their little Bible study.

And after a while, after a few minutes, this Bible teacher was amazed at how many people had gathered around to listen and to participate in the reading of the scripture. And in fact, each of the days of this trip, the conductor would actually walk through the entire train. He'd say, Bible study in car number 4. If you want to go, you're all invited. And the place got packed with people by the time they got to Southern California.

He said it was literally packed with folks who just wanted to get into the word. And when he finally got home, this Bible teacher was reflecting on what had happened during that trip, and he realized that the people who had come and joined him on, in that train car to get into the word were people from all different walks of life, different countries, different denominational backgrounds, different affiliations, even some various kind of weird beliefs thrown in.

And yet, you know what? They were all joined by the Spirit. It was the work of the Spirit. And nobody asked one another, so what church do you go to? And do you guys believe the good stuff, or what? Or whatever. You know how we... Can you imagine somebody starting to have a Bible study and then saying, oh, by the way, this is only for people who believe such and such and such. And if you have to have my translation of the Bible, if you have a different one, you can go somewhere else.

That is not preserving the unity of the Spirit, by the way, that's the opposite. When there is a work of the Spirit that's going on, you and I need to be very eager, as Paul says here, to protect that unity. Here's why. Because to do so is to walk in a manner that is of equal weight to your calling.

Because you and I have been called to reflect Jesus Christ to a lost and dying world. And believe me, people who don't know him are going to see the difference. They're going to see the unity. They're going to see the patience. They're going to see the humility. They're going to see the gentleness. And they're going to be attracted to it.

And they're going to want to come and ask you questions about it. And the thing that you and I need to do is we need to confess that we have not walked in these

things very well. In fact, I'd give us probably about a C minus, but you know what?

We're being made aware today that this is a work of the Holy Spirit and we need to come to him for the power to do these things. This is not something, again, I reiterate to you that's going to well up from inside of your flesh. This must be a work of the Spirit. And when it is a work of the Spirit, it is a beautiful thing.