

The Worthy Walk
Ephesians 4:1-6

Bethany Baptist Church
June 25, 2017

...pray...

“Walking” is a simple but effective *word picture*.

If I say – *walk a mile in my shoes*, I’m appealing to you to see *life* from my *path*.

If I warn you to – *watch where you step* or *tread lightly*, I’m worried about where your *life is headed*.

So your *walk* is your *lifestyle*, and there are *good walks & bad walks*.

Your Bible likes the *walking metaphor*, too, w/ many examples (**OT/NT**).

Psa 1:1 – *How blessed is the man who does not walk in the way of the wicked!*

Psa 82:5 - *They do not know nor do they understand; they walk about in darkness.*

2 Cor 5:7 – *for we walk by faith, not by sight*

1 John 1:7 – *if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another & the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

One more, this one from the pen of the Apostle Paul:

Eph 4:1 – *walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called*

Let’s begin the second half of Ephesians by turning together to 4:1-6!

Most of Paul’s letters can be simply *outlined* in **two points**: the **first half** is *teaching* (doctrine) & the **second half** is *instruction* (lifestyle).

Today’s text **begins** the *instructive half* of Ephesians with Paul’s call to *walk worthy* of the gospel. So let’s take some basic *walking lessons!*

How to walk like a Christian.

- 1. The call to the Christian walk (v.1).**
- 2. The steps of the Christian walk (vv.2-3).**
- 3. The fuel for the Christian walk (vv.4-6).**

Paul steps into the second half of his letter with a forceful call to walk like a Christian (v.1).

1. Many Engl translations lose the *force* of Paul's words. In the Gr he lit. wrote this: ***I implore you, therefore, I the prisoner of the Lord, to walk worthy of the calling with which you've been called.***
 - a. So the *very first words* of Paul's *instructions for living* are **not** a calm suggestion, but an impassioned command, implying his *authority* (apostle) ...
 - b. ...**and** spelling out the *price* he's personally paid to *walk* the gospel & *speak* the gospel *into the lives* of the Ephesians.
 - c. So for the **2nd** time the apostle reminds this church that he is *imprisoned* for them. We've just read in **3:1** – *I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles.*
 - d. If you *loved* Paul & you *loved* the gospel you couldn't *walk away* from a call like this!

2. Paul is *summoning* every Christian to *walk worthy* of their gospel calling.
 - a. Again, "*to walk*" is a common but clear picture of the way you live your life. Your *walk* is your *lifestyle*.
 - b. The "*calling*" Paul refers to is "*God's effectual call to salvation thru faith in Jesus.*" If we pull together a few verses Paul has already *penned* in Eph we can better understand what the Bible means by "*the calling*" & "*our call*" (have them **turn & read** w/ you):
 - i. **1:4-5** – *Our call* began w/God's sovereign *choice* of us in eternity past, *predestining* us to spiritual adoption. Christian, *God did not chose you* based on your *worth*. *He did not chose you* based on some response He saw in you. *He just chose you!*
 - ii. **1:13** – *Our call* then **FFs** to the time we *heard* the gospel, and *believed*, and were *sealed in Christ* by the Holy Spirit, who was *given* to us, *never to leave* us.

- iii. **2:8-9** – It is important to understand that even the faith to trust Christ was God’s sovereign & gracious gift; a part of *our call*.
 - iv. Paul summed all this truth up for us in **Rom 8:29-30** – *For those whom God foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would become the firstborn of many brethren; and those whom He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified; and those whom He justified, He also glorified.*
- c. Paul pulls together our *gospel calling* & our *daily walk* with a compelling idea: *worthy*... Your life should be *worthy* of the gospel that saved you!
- i. This is another *idea* Paul loves – *worthiness*.
 - ii. His Gr term is **αξιτος**. You can trace it to the idea of a *merchant’s scale* – whatever you put in the *right* side needs be *balanced* by what you put in the *left*. Thus *equity* or *deservedness* or *worthiness*.
 - iii. Do you get Paul’s *point*? ... God has graciously put the Gospel of Jesus (*death, resurrection, forgiveness, new life, eternal life*) in the scales for you (*saved!*) – you now must respond by *putting your life in scales for Him*.
 - iv. So how does it *balance*...? ***What a profound picture!***

Paul then maps out the challenge of the gospel-worthy walk with five first steps (read vv.2-3).

1. They say “*every journey begins w/a single step.*” You begin your **worthy walk** with these **5 first steps**: *humility, gentleness, patience, loving forbearance, & unity.* Each of these steps leads straight to the next.
2. The *worthy walk* begins w/**humility**. *Humility* is (lit.) *lowliness of mind*.
 - a. The pagan culture of Paul’s day **despised** *humility*, there wasn’t even a Greek word for it! Christians *coined* the Gr vocab Paul used!
 - b. Yet from the first teachings of *Jesus*, the necessity of *starting out* with *humility* was clear:
 - i. Jesus taught (**1st** Beatitude, Sermon on Mt) – “*Blessed are the poor in spirit.*” We have *nothing* & need *God!*
 - ii. Later our Lord said (Mt 11) – “*Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.*”
 - c. The **NT**, echoing the **OT**, cautions us that *God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*
 - d. **OBTW**, the *opposite* of **humility** & the *enemy* of **humility** is *pride!* One of the best defenses against pride is to *honestly examine* your own **weakness** & to *continually study* God’s **greatness**.
3. *Humility* leads to **gentleness**.
 - a. What do you *picture* when someone is described as “*gentle?*” *Timid? Wimpy? Weak?*
 - b. That’s **not** what Paul had in mind! Paul’s word suggested “*strength under control*”. He would have also used it to describe a *well-trained thoroughbred race horse. Manageable, useful* – but hardly *weak!*
 - c. *Gentleness* is a *fruit of the Spirit*, which means that Christians will grow *gentler* & thus *more self-controlled* with time.

- d. We should carefully understand that *gentleness* does **not** necessarily rule-out *anger & strong responses*. Controlling your *spiritual & emotional* power means you *get angry* at the right times & *reign it in* at the wrong times.
 - i. The *right times* are when **God** is *blasphemed* or our **neighbor** is treated *unjustly*.
 - ii. The *wrong times* are when we are **knee-jerk angry** because something just didn't go our way.
 - e. **Jesus** was a perfect example of this balance.
 - i. When the *greedy scribes* turned the Temple into a *religious rummage sale*, Jesus drove them out w/ a *whip*.
 - ii. When the Pharisees & Romans gave Him an *excruciating beating* before crucifying Him, He held His *tongue* & held back the *angels* & trusted His *Heavenly Father*.
4. *Gentleness* leads to **patience**. Paul's word suggests the ability *to suffer under some hardship for a long time*. It's another *fruit of the Spirit*.
- a. *Noah* was patient. He *built the Ark* in his backyard & *preached judgment* in his neighborhood for **120** years. All that time it **never rained** but patient Noah **never stopped**.
 - b. *Abraham* was patient (most of the time). God promised Abraham & Sarah a child when he was **75**. The couple waited **25** years for their son *Isaac* to arrive!
 - c. *Jesus* was patient (*all of the time*). He patiently *taught & led & refereed* the spiritually slow *disciples* for **three** years, molding them into the *spiritually elite unit* that He then used to *build His church*.

5. *Patience* results in **loving forbearance** – “*showing tolerance for one another in love.*”
- a. *Tolerance* would have been essential for bringing formerly *hostile* groups *together* in the Church. Groups like *Gentiles* & former *Jews* who had come to faith in Christ.
 - b. Paul makes it clear this isn’t simply “*grit your teeth tolerance*”! It is *agape*-powered *forbearing*. It’s *forbearing* marinated in *love*.
 - c. The actions & attitudes that *hold together* a church for a long time require **unconditional** & **unselfish** & **sacrificial** love – **godly** love!
6. So *fifth step*, when all of these *attitudes* pave the path, **unity** waits at the finish line (**read v.3**).
- a. Our goal is to experience the *unity* created by the Holy Spirit. We **are** *united* because the *Spirit* lives in every *individual Christian* & He also (2:22) dwells in the *Church*.
 - b. Yet we are still responsible to strive to *promote* & *protect* our unity.
 - c. Taking these first steps with one another – *humility* & *gentleness* & *patience* & *loving forbearance* – will lead us to *peace* & *unity*.
 - d. By making *unity* the destination of this **5-point set of directions**, the apostle is once again *underlining* the importance of **unity** among God’s people.

Every step you take *burns calories*. Every journey *requires fuel*. Paul has *fuel for the worthy walk* (read vv.4-6).

1. Our *fuel* is a *high octane blend* of the truths we all *embrace & experience* as Christians.
 - a. These are truths we *all believe* about God,
 - b. These are truths about what God has done in *every one of us*.
 - c. These are truths that are very *fundamental*. (They also very *Trinitarian*.)
 - d. These are truths that *unite us*.

2. We are *united* by the truth about the **one** *Holy Spirit*.
 - a. (OBTW, the word “*one*” shows up **7X** in these **3** short verses. Paul’s point, of course, is *shared, non-negotiable truths* → *unity!*)
 - b. The *one body* is the *body of Christ*, which is the **church** (cf 1:22-23). The *church* is the *biggest theme* in Ephesians.
 - c. We’ve already examined our *calling* with v.1 – *God’s effectual call to salvation thru faith in Jesus*.
 - i. *Salvation* requires *faith* in God’s promises, which includes *forgiveness* of sins & the *gift* of eternal life. ***These promises are our hope!*** *Hope* in the Bible never means a *wish* – *hope* never suggests *uncertainty* – it means *assurance* that God will keep His promises in His time.
 - ii. Every Christian shares the *one unifying hope* that God has *forgiven* his/her sins & now *heaven* is waiting!

3. We are *united* by the truth about the **one Lord** (5).

- a. *Jesus is Lord!* (**Can you say that w/ me? ☺ Amen!**) *Lord* is one of the most popular **NT** titles for Jesus & it means “*master*” or “*boss.*” Every Christian, *young* or old, *rich* or poor, *high* or low has the *same master* – *Lord Jesus*.
- b. Jesus is the *hero* of the gospel! That’s what Paul means (5) by **one faith** – the *doctrines & commandments of Jesus’ Good News*. Here is *one faith* we all embrace:
 - i. *God demonstrated His own love toward us in that while we...*
 - ii. Then God *raised Jesus from the grave on the 3rd day* (the angel said – “*Why do you seek the Living One among the dead, He is not here, He has risen, just as He said!*”)
 - iii. Jesus is *alive & lives & rules forever*. He offers you *forgiveness & a new heart & eternal life* if you *turn to Him & trust* in Him.
 - iv. **That’s the one true faith!**
- c. Jesus commands each & every believer to publically testify of your faith by *believer’s baptism*. That’s the **one baptism** in **v.5**.
 - i. Jesus commanded: **go into all the world, preach the one faith, make disciples, teach disciples, ... & baptize those disciples!**
 - ii. *Believer’s baptism* is kind of like a *new soldier* taking the *public oath of enlistment*.
 - iii. Jesus commands *every* believer to be *baptized* – if you *won’t* tell the world that you are a *good soldier of Christ* by *obeying* this *first command*, how can you claim to be His disciple?

4. The unifying truth about the **one** true *God* –our *Father in Heaven* (**read v.6**).

a. Our God as *our Father* is a repeated truth in Ephesians....

- i. There is only *one* God, the God of Bible.
- ii. And God has *adopted* us, thus we are His *children*.
- iii. Be *careful!* When Paul writes that God is “*Father of all*” he means *all Christians*. The context makes that very clear: *all who share one body, one Spirit, one calling, one hope, one Lord, one gospel faith, one obedient baptism.*
- iv. By God’s *grace*, that’s *us!*

b. Paul concludes with a **hat-trick** of *prepositions* that *bind* us to God & to *one another*: ***over & through & in.***

- i. Our Father is ***over*** us **all!** God is *sovereign*. Our King!
- ii. Our Father is ***through*** us **all!** God is *omnipotent* (all powerful), and He *works through us!*
 1. **2:10** –*We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, that we might walk in them!*
- iii. Our Father is ***in*** us **all!** God is *omnipresent*. Particularly, the *Father* is in every one of His *children*. Last Sunday we read:
 1. **3:17** – *that Christ may dwell in your hearts thru faith!*
 2. **3:19** - *that you may be filled up w/all the fullness of God!*

We belong to the *one true God*. And so, we are all ***one!***

It is very *intentional* & very *important* that Paul began the “*instructive*” **half** of his letter with this *call to unity*.

Which means we should think of “*preserving unity*” as a fundamental duty of our Christian lives.

So consider this, in closing:

- ***You can't walk alone!*** The Christian life is ***not*** the life of a *spiritual loner*.
 - *Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together.*
- ***You can't dawdle!*** The Christian life involves *hard spiritual work* to attain *unity*.
 - There is nothing ***easy*** about *humility, gentleness* (→ *self-control*), *patience, unselfish love, & diligence*.
 - There is nothing ***popular*** today about insisting on ***one*** *body of truth & practice*.

The ***worthy*** walk is a ***long*** walk...sometimes it will seem like an ***uphill*** walk...but don't *give up* or *get distracted* – the ***view*** will be worth *the climb*.

...pray...