



WORTHY OF THE VOCATION

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As the fourth chapter of Ephesians begins, the apostle Paul resumes a thought he broke off in chapter 3, verse 2. His “therefore” here refers to what he wrote in chapter 2, verses 19-22. In that context he reminds the Gentile Christians that, through Christ, they have been changed from strangers and foreigners to become fellow-citizens in the kingdom of God with those Jews who obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ. They have been “builded together for an habitation of God” (2:22). This great spiritual truth is the antecedent of the admonition Paul then logically presents to the saints in these important first six verses of the fourth chapter.

WALK WORTHY

Since Christians are [1] adopted into the household of God (2:19), [2] built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (2:20), and [3] builded together through the Spirit (2:22), it is therefore logical to expect us to “walk worthy” (behave in a manner that is worthy) of the status we have been given. As he wrote it to the saints in Rome, Paul would have us to present our “bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God” *because* we have been given eternal life through Jesus Christ (Romans 12:1-2). Peter urges the same with a question: what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness...? (II Peter 3:11). But what is the “holy conversation” (behavior) that is “acceptable to God”? In other words, what walk is “worthy of the vocation wherewith (we) are called”?

The “vocation” of which Paul writes in Ephesians 4:1 is that “calling” of which he writes in verse 4 of the same chapter. The same Greek word (*kleyisis*) appears 11 times in the New Testament. It is translated “calling” 10 times and “vocation” this once. We are discussing that “high calling of God” of Philippians 3:14, and that “heavenly calling” of Hebrews 3:1. It is the “calling and election” which we are to make sure (II Peter 1:10), and that “calling” the hope of which Paul prays we might understand (Ephesians 1:18). It is the status of being a Christian, saved by the blood of Christ, and of being in the church which is His body (Ephesians 1:22-23).

It should be clear by now that the Holy Spirit, by the pen of Paul, is beseeching (*praying, asking with intensity, pleading with*) us to behave as people who have been given the greatest gift of all, even though we did not deserve it and could never gain it by any means under our own power or control. In gratitude to God for His wonderful gift of salvation in Christ, Christians should joyfully live after the manner worthy of such a gift.

No one is in a right relationship with God who does not suppress his own feelings and desires, and exalt instead the will of God.

FIVE PARTICULARS

Neither does the Holy Spirit leave us to decide for ourselves what this manner of life should be. The very same sentence which admonishes us to live lives worthy of our calling, includes also five words which define the admonition and describe the attitude, character and life-style of those whose lives are “acceptable to God” (Romans 12:1).

LOWLINESS. Comparing what we now have in Christ with what we had and who we were before He saved us will bring us to humility before Him. Many aren’t humble, because they don’t think on this comparison. In the first three verses of Ephesians 2 Paul describes our condition prior to our gospel obedience. We “walked according to the course of this world.” Not any more. The way of the unsaved is that of “fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.” In our day it’s called “living by your feelings.” Christians must overcome that, and live by “thus saith the Lord.” No one is in a right relationship with God who does not suppress his own feelings and desires, and exalt instead the will of God.

MEEKNESS. The natural result and outward *expression* of that spiritual lowliness is *meekness*. The opposite of boisterous self-assertion and rude striving with others for supremacy, meekness is often encouraged upon

God's faithful. It is that subdued manner and peace-loving spirit that studies to give the "soft answer" that "turneth away wrath" (Proverbs 15:1). When a meek person encounters a disagreement in life, he will not "give them a piece of his mind," but will rather "walk a mile in his moccasins." The injunction to meekness is not to a part-time spirit that "gets along with others as long as they get along with me," but is a practical determination to "live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18).

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. (Ephesians 4:1-3)

LONGSUFFERING. The worthy walk is a pattern of life that is patient with brethren and that overlooks their faults and gives them time and proper encouragement to repent and build a godly life. The word "longsuffering" means a patience that seemingly has no end. That doesn't characterize very many people in the world. The norm is impatience. In the world the person who isn't what another thinks he ought to be is immediately rejected as not worthy of support. If the Lord had that attitude, none would be saved, for none is everything he ought to be. Yet, He has saved us, so we should be unendingly patient with others.

FORBEARING. The worthy walk tolerates imperfections in others as the Lord tolerates ours. Specifically, forbearance in the church refuses to be offended at the words and actions of other Christians. When the love we have for one another prohibits our being offended by the little words and actions of our brothers and sisters, then we are "forbearing one another in love." The quickly-offended person sins in not forbearing his brethren.

ENDEAVORING to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. It is characteristic of the faithful Christian – the person walking according to the admonition of Ephesians 4:1-6 which we are here considering – that he tries always in all circumstances to promote peace that binds brethren together in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Paul so *beseeches* every one of us. Those who don't endeavor (try) to keep unity and peace, but "quit the church" at every disagreement, are sinning before God and need to repent.

Paul himself is a good illustration of the walk he encourages upon us. He gave his life to the Lord for the benefit of the eternal souls of men and women everywhere. What a sharp contrast we see between the life of Paul and the lives of many in the church today!

Shame on us if we fail to do so. Worse than shame: eternal damnation is reserved for all who fail to so glorify God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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