

Living UP TO OUR Heavenly Calling

A study in the book of Ephesians

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Ephesians 4:1-16

Introduction

Last week we completed chapter 3, which is the doctrinal portion of Paul's letter. Now for almost the entire remainder of the letter, he begins an admonition of how we who are "in Christ" should live.

So, after the first three chapters where Paul has given them very important theology about who God is and why he is trustworthy, the last three chapters are devoted to the "so what." How does that make any difference in you—in your attitude, your motivation, how you live your life?

Ephesians 4: 1 – 6 (ESV)

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

If I asked you what is your calling "in Christ," what would you tell me?

Being called by God to walk worthy is part of who you are "in Christ." We all have a special calling when we are "in Christ." There is no higher calling than this—to walk in a manner worthy of our Lord Jesus Christ.



Catherine, Princess of Wales, is an example of what a princess should look like and how she should conduct herself. She "walks worthy" of her calling.

But if she showed up in this yellow tacky dress, we would be so disappointed. That's not what a princess wears. It's not worthy of a princess!



As daughters of King Jesus, we cannot afford to neglect or fail to understand what it means to walk worthy of our calling. It's more important than even a queen or a princess!

Paul begins by giving us four characteristics of a person who is walking worthy:

Walking in Humility

Humility does not come naturally to any of us. We can try to appear humble, but even when we do that, being humble and appearing humble are not the same thing.

1 Peter 5:5b– 6: (ESV) *Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you.”*

This is what Jesus said:

Luke 18:14b: (ESV) *“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”*

If you don’t humble yourself, Jesus said you will be humbled.

What are some examples of how you can humble yourself?

Spiritual Muscle Memory

Spiritual muscle memory happens when you repeat a biblical principle—like humbling yourself—so many times, so often, that it starts to happen without conscious thought!

Walking in gentleness

- A gentle tongue
- A gentle touch
- A gentle tone of voice
- A gentle look of kindness

Walking with patience/Bearing with one another

- Giving people time to grow
- Giving others many second chances
- Forgiving without being asked
- Putting up with the eccentricities of our fellow-Christians

Eager to maintain unity

In Jesus we share one body, one Spirit, one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one Father.

Unity doesn’t imply uniformity. It does *not* mean that all Christians will think alike or perform identical ministries

What is the difference in dependence and interdependence?

- **Dependence:** One-sided reliance, often with a power imbalance.
- **Interdependence:** A reciprocal relationship where everyone relies on each other to some degree but maintains their own autonomy.

As believers, we should be interdependent on each other. How do the close friendships of other believers impact your life?

Charles Spurgeon pointed out some of the things that the text does *not* say.

- It does not say, “To endeavor to maintain the unity of evil, the unity of superstition, or the unity of spiritual tyranny.”
- It does not say, “Endeavoring to keep up your ecclesiastical arrangements for centralization.”
- It does not say, “Endeavoring to keep the uniformity of the Spirit.”

Ephesians 4:7 – 16: (ESV)

But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men."

⁹(In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? ¹⁰He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) ¹¹And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Jesus Christ, after conquering sin and death through his resurrection, ascended to heaven in triumph, taking the power of evil with him, and then distributed spiritual gifts to his followers, empowering them to build up the church.

The King James version says: "*When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.*" It emphasizes that Jesus conquered the powers of darkness, sin, and death through his sacrifice, and that is what sets us free from these powers.

What particular gifts does Paul refer to in this passage?

- **Apostles**, who are special ambassadors of God's Word, though not in the same authoritative sense of the first century apostles.
- **Prophets**, who speak forth words from God in complete consistency with the foundation of the Old and New Testaments. Sometimes they speak in a predictive sense, but not necessarily so.
- **Evangelists**, who are specifically gifted to preach the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.
- **Pastors and teachers** who shepherd the flock of God primarily through teaching the Word of God.

What is the purpose for these gifts?

- To equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.
Did you know that if you are born again, you are a saint?
Romans 1:7: (NKJV) *To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be **saints**.*

What are the saints equipped for?

- The saints are equipped for ministry. We think of those with these gifts as having a "ministry," but truly their ministry is to equip us for ministry.
- The ministry to which every Christian is called is to build up the body.

How does Paul describe a mature Christian?

- It is a Christian who is continually growing in their knowledge of the Son of God.
- The ultimate measure of maturity is the "measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Jesus is our standard; we are to be like Jesus.

2 Corinthians 3:18: (ESV) *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*

We will never reach this complete transformation until we are with Christ, but we should be more like Jesus today than we were a year ago. And you should never measure yourself against anyone else except Jesus.

- Another measure of maturity is stability.

James 1:2 –8 (ESV)

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. ⁵If any of you lacks wisdom, let him

ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. ⁶But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

- Another measure of maturity is loving truthfulness. It is possible to speak the truth but not in love. However, not to speak the truth when it needs to be spoken is not loving either. Truth can hurt, even when spoken in love, but it also can bring healing.

Take-Aways

Evaluate your spiritual maturity according to this passage from Ephesians 4.

1. Do you intentionally humble yourself regularly?
___ Yes ___ No ___ Not regularly
2. How do you humble yourself?
By _____
By _____
By _____
3. Do you usually have a gentle manner?
___ Yes ___ No ___ Not often enough
4. Do you intentionally try to show patience to others?
___ Yes ___ No ___ Not often enough
5. Do you strive to maintain unity with others, especially other believers?
___ Yes ___ No
6. Are you growing in your knowledge of God?
___ Yes ___ No ___ Not consistently
If "yes", how?
7. Are you more like Jesus today than you were a year ago?
___ Yes ___ No ___ Not sure
8. Is your faith steadfast even in tough times?
___ Yes ___ No ___ Sometimes
9. Are you lovingly truthful with others?
___ Yes ___ No ___ Mostly

Memorize:

