**The Worthy Walk, Part 1**

**Ephesians 4:1-2**

**February 28, 2021**

1. Introduction
   1. It’s fascinating to see how difficult it can be for people to take something they know intellectually and put it into practice in a real-world application.
      1. I’ve done my fair share of coaching, and as a coach in practice, you drill the proper form, technique, and strategy into the heads of your players.
         1. You hope that by repeatedly practicing the movements and discussing game situations that what gets in their heads in practice will come out in a practical way come game time.
         2. But as any coach knows, the players can have all the right information in their heads and still make the wrong play in the game.
      2. We see this even at the professional level of sports.
         1. One of the greatest left-handed pitching prospects in a generation was named Rick Ankiel of the St. Louis Cardinals.
         2. He had been minor league player of the year, and when he was just 21 years old, he was brought into a playoff game against the Atlanta Braves in 2000.
         3. In that division series, Ankiel pitched four innings, walked eleven batters, and threw nine wild pitches.
         4. To put that in perspective, nine wild pitches in a playoff series broke a record that had stood since 1890, and Ankiel managed to do it in only four innings!
         5. In baseball, it’s known as a case of the yips, when a player suddenly forgets how to play.
         6. The knowledge is in his head, but what comes out on the field looks like someone who has never touched a baseball in his life.
   2. The reality in the church is that many Christians often appear to have a case of the spiritual yips.
      1. They know the gospel, they understand that Christ died for their sins, and they know that God has called them to live a holy life, and yet the practical outworking of what is in their head reveals a massive disconnect in their life.
      2. It is wonderful and glorious for us to read about being filled up to all the fullness of God and how God can do far more abundantly, infinitely beyond all we can ask or imagine.
      3. Our hearts soar to the heights of heaven as we think about these marvelous promises of God!
      4. But the apostle wants us not only to soar to the heights of heaven because of these truths but to live out the implications of these realities in our earthly lives.
   3. He brings this out with the first word of Eph 4:1 – **therefore**.
      1. This word signals that Paul is now transitioning from the *what* of this letter to the *so what* of this letter.
         1. He has patiently and systematically spelled out the truths of the gospel of God’s grace.
         2. But now he begins to answer the question, So what?
         3. What do we do now that we have this information?
         4. Now that we know we are saved by God’s grace, is there anything left to do while we wait for Jesus to return?
         5. And the answer, as we will see in chapters 4-6, is that the good news of what God has done for us in Christ has massive implications for every area of our lives.
      2. It’s vital at this point to understand what the apostle is doing.
         1. It is not accidental that he begins his letter with the doctrines of God’s saving grace, and only after putting forward these truths does he come to the behavior of the believer.
         2. Ephesians does not begin with chapter 4; indeed, it cannot begin with chapter 4.
         3. The Christian life is always a consequence of Christian truth, Christian theology.
         4. We have many people today within the visible church who want to emphasize Ephesians 4-6 but who never take the time to stop and understand Ephesians 1-3.
         5. To do that is to cut the gospel off at the knees.
         6. What Paul spells out in the second half of this letter is the therefore that comes as a result of the truths of the gospel in the first half.
      3. Misunderstanding this point leads many Christians to frustration and failure in their spiritual lives.
         1. They try to live out a godly life without the proper foundation.
         2. They see Christianity as a set of morals or principles of behavior, and they think that they are supposed to carry out these principles as a way of earning something before God.
         3. Or maybe they think of it like this: They want God to do something for them, so they seek to live a certain way with the hope that God will then do something good for them in return.
         4. But here in this opening word of verse 1, we see that the proper way a Christian is motivated to holiness is not in terms of doing something for God but in response to what God has already done for us.
         5. We are not trying to earn God’s favor through obedience; God has already given us His favor by grace in Christ.
         6. Our obedience is the joyful response of faith to God’s finished work for us in Christ.
         7. And it’s only when we put these things in their proper order: doctrine and then duty, that we find that we can live out the Christian life through the power of the Spirit of God.
   4. Notice how Paul sums up our duty in response to the doctrines of the gospel in v. 1…
      1. He exhorts us to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which we have been called.
         1. The NASB uses the word **implore**, but perhaps a better understanding would be to say he exhorts them.
         2. It is really, in a sense, a polite version of a command, or coming as close to a command as you can come without directly giving an order.
         3. He comes alongside the Ephesians and wants to move them to a worthy walk.
      2. The idea of walking in this context is simply that of living your daily life.
         1. It was a common metaphor in Paul’s day and throughout the Bible.
         2. In fact, the idea of walking frames the rest of the Ephesians.
            1. In 4:17, he tells the Ephesians no longer to walk as the Gentiles, and then in verse 22 switches away from the metaphor and calls this their manner of life.
            2. That’s what a walk is: the manner that you live out your life in the day-to-day decisions, words, actions, and thoughts.
            3. Then we see in 5:2 that we are called to walk in love as Paul begins a new section.
            4. In 5:8 we are told to walk as children of light.
            5. And then the last section opens in 5:15 where Paul tells us to walk in wisdom.
            6. The rest of this letter, then, is especially concerned with our walk, or our manner of life as the people of God.
         3. Paul introduced this concept in Eph 2:2, when he told the Ephesians that before they were saved they walked according to the course of this world.
            1. They lived in a way that was just like the ungodly world around them
            2. Their manner of living was in accordance with the work of Satan rather than the work of Christ.
         4. But then in Eph 2:10 he told them that we were created for good works so that we would walk in them.
            1. And so in a very real sense Paul has been waiting all this time, laying down this doctrine, so he could finally come to what these good works are that we are called to walk in.
            2. Ephesians 4:1 picks this up and now puts it before us so that we understand the good works God has created us to do in Christ.
      3. The calling, then, is to walk in a manner worthy of our calling.
         1. The term translated **worthy** in v. 1 is a term related to the world of weights and measures.
         2. Its original connotation was something that made the scale balance out.
         3. It referred to something that corresponded to something else appropriately.
         4. That visual image helps us understand exactly what it means to walk worthy in this context: our lives should correspond to the gospel.
         5. Our lives should accurately reflect the grace of God.
         6. Our live should demonstrate that we are indeed new creatures, the workmanship of God, created for good works.
   5. Now, the question that we have to answer as we think about this statement in v. 1 is this: what does it mean to walk worthy of our calling?
      1. What is the worthy walk?
      2. What does it look like?
      3. And thankfully, the apostle does not leave us to guess what the Lord has in mind, but he spells it out mostly plainly in vv. 1-3.
      4. It’s going to take us a couple weeks to get through all of this, but let’s begin this morning by looking at the first way we live out the worthy walk, namely, to walk worthy of our calling you must…
2. Understand your calling (v. 1)
   1. This point might seem obvious, but it’s a point we have to consider because I am convinced that many Christians do not understand their calling.
      1. In fact, I think the past year has only made this more evident than ever.
      2. What is our calling as believers as Paul means it in this verse?
   2. This is only the second time this word **calling** has appeared in this letter, and it’s the first time the verb **have been called** has appeared.
      1. The other instance of calling was in 1:18, where Paul wrote…
         1. As the verse indicates, Paul was praying for the Ephesians, and this was his first request for them: that they would know the hope of His calling.
         2. As the prayer unfolds, we begin to see more ways Paul describes this hope of our calling: we have an inheritance with the saints, and we who believe have God’s power at work in us, the same power that raised Christ from the dead and made Him the head of the church, which is His body.
         3. In other words, when we think about this hope of our calling, it cannot be separated from our relationship with all the saints and our membership in the body of Christ, the church.
      2. This is confirmed as the letter continues in chapter 2 and Paul repeatedly talks about what God has done for *us* in Christ.
         1. We are part of this group that God has saved by grace.
         2. We are His workmanship, not only as individuals, but especially together as His church.
      3. And then Paul emphasizes not our individualism in 2:11-22 but our participation in the body of Christ with all the saints.
         1. Both groups have been made into one new man.
         2. We have been reconciled to God and one another through Christ in one body, the church.
         3. We both have our access to God the same way, through Christ in one Spirit.
         4. We are now fellow citizens with the saints, part of a group of people.
         5. We are members of God’s family, God’s household.
         6. And we collectively are being built into the dwelling place of God as His temple.
         7. The emphasis repeatedly falls on the fact that we are no longer wandering alone in the universe as rebels against God but that through salvation we have been brought into a community, into a body, into the church of Jesus Christ.
         8. Even in 3:6 we are reminded again that we are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body of Christ.
         9. In 3:10, Paul says that the wisdom of God is made manifest to the spiritual powers through the church, the body of which we are members.
         10. And even when Paul issues his masterful prayer in 3:14-21, we are reminded that our comprehension of the love of Christ is something we comprehend not individually in isolation from each other but with all the saints.
      4. In fact, what is the church?
         1. The Greek term translated *church* is *ekklesia*.
         2. That word literally means *those called out*.
         3. We are the called of God, called out of the world and into the body of Christ.
      5. There is in the church today a toxic individualism that permeates evangelical life.
         1. When we think about our calling, we often think of it in purely individualistic terms, in isolation from others.
         2. We have been called to salvation, we have been called to Christ, we have been called to holiness, or we have been called to some ministry.
         3. And so we think of walking worthy purely in terms of Jesus and me living life together.
         4. We fail to see the connection between the worthy walk and our participation in the body of Christ.
         5. If the primary emphasis of our being called is the fact that we are called to membership in the body of Christ, that radically changes not only how we view ourselves but how we view the entire Christian life.
         6. It is no longer possible to live the Christian life in isolation because the very nature of our calling puts us in relationship with other believers.
         7. A Christian cannot exist without participating in the church and its life because the fundamental nature of what it means to be called by God is to be called into the body of Christ, the new creation, the family of God, the kingdom of Christ, the dwelling place of God as His holy temple.
      6. It should come as no surprise, then, to find that almost everything Paul will have to say about walking worthy of our calling in the rest of Ephesians is said in the context of our relationships with others, especially those in the church.
   3. We must understand our calling if we are to walk worthy of it.
      1. And the reality is that we are not called to live a life alone with Jesus.
      2. We are called into the body of Christ, into the church, as members of God’s family, and we live out our calling in a worthy manner in that context.
   4. Now, second, to live worthy of our calling we must also…
3. Cultivate godly character (v. 2)
   1. It’s instructive that Paul does not begin telling us how to walk worthy of our calling to be members of Christ’s body by showing us how we can fix the other members of the body who bother us.
      1. It can be easy to think that the best way we could serve the cause of Christ as part of the church is to help everyone else in the church get their act together.
      2. How often we see the problems in the church coming from other people and their issues, not from us!
      3. And yet, the apostle does not tell us to walk worthy as part of the church by fixing everyone else, but by focusing on cultivating godly character that enables us to live godly lives in the body of Christ with imperfect people.
      4. Paul outlines three characteristics we need to focus on in our lives if we would walk worthy and cultivate godly character.
   2. The first trait we need to cultivate is humility.
      1. There is nothing more contrary to the fallen heart of man than the Christian virtue of humility.
         1. In fact, the first century writer Epictetus listed humility first among qualities that human beings should not seek to cultivate.
         2. In the second century, the Greco-Roman world openly ridiculed Christians for their esteem of humility over pride.
         3. Humility is scorned by the world as folly.
         4. What the world calls people to is pride.
         5. In our nation, we have an entire month dedicated to pride.
         6. And it’s not just any kind of pride, but pride in sexual perversion.
         7. It’s a living illustration of Philippians 3:19, which says…
         8. But make no mistake about it, pride month is the inevitable fruit of the poisonous root of all human pride.
         9. Pride is the casting away of god and setting up our own desires as god, as Paul says in Phil 3:19.
         10. Pride is to esteem yourself as of maximum importance: my desires, my feelings, my needs, my will.
         11. The person who is proud the person who is utterly self-centered, and the final determining factor in every decision is self.
      2. To be humble, then, is the opposite of being proud.
         1. That means that the humble person does not live life with self as the all-important determining factor in what we think, say, or do.
         2. What is that which determines the way the humble person lives?
         3. Look back at Isaiah 66:2.
            1. In this passage, the Lord is rebuking Israel for their pride in the temple as they boast in earthly things.
            2. What the Lord desires is not people who are proud of their own achievements, but people who manifest genuine humility.
            3. What does that look like?
            4. To be humble in this passage entails two things:

It requires that you be contrite of spirit.

That means that you recognize your own sinfulness.

To be contrite is to be broken in spirit, to be repentant.

And the only way to be broken in spirit over your sinfulness is for you to recognize that you are not God’s gift to humanity, but you are a sinner who is worthy of God’s divine judgment.

It’s very similar to what Jesus said when He started the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:3: **Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

To be contrite of spirit is to be poor in spirit, to recognize your spiritual need, your spiritual poverty.

One of the things that will absolutely destroy your testimony and cripple your walk is having the idea that you have something to offer the church.

The sobering reality is that in ourselves all we bring to the church is brokenness and neediness.

If we have anything of value, it comes from the grace of God, not from ourselves.

And if we want to walk worthy of our calling as members of Christ’s body, how vital it is that we see our need of Christ and not think that others are in need of us.

The one and only thing that anyone in the church needs is Jesus Christ.

God may be pleased to use you to encourage a brother or sister with the grace of Christ, but how crucial it is that we recognize that we are instruments of God, and not the source of grace!

If we would walk with all humility, we must be as Isaiah 66:2 says contrite of spirit, and as Matthew 5:3 says, poor in spirit.

To be humble also requires that we tremble at God’s Word.

That means that we are not the final arbiter of what we do.

Our appetites and desires do not dictate our lives.

Instead, what guides our decisions and our actions as the people of God is the Word of God.

We tremble at His Word.

We honor His Word.

We are overwhelmed by His words of grace that speak salvation to us.

We take seriously His warnings of discipline for sin.

We tremble at His pronouncements of judgment upon the ungodly.

The Word of God becomes the determining factor, then, in everything in our lives.

The truly humble person is the person whose entire life is dominated by the Word of God because that person fears the Lord.

There is a crisis of humility today, even in the church, because humility has been re-defined from what it means biblically.

See, today, it would not surprise me for someone to say that I am being proud up here this morning, or if they have listened to other sermons where I have spoken with authority to various issues, especially controversial ones.

I have often heard this criticism of people like John MacArthur, that he is proud.

I had a worship director, not at this church, but at another church, tell me that John MacArthur was the least Christlike preacher he had ever heard.

Why?

Because he spoke with authority.

Why do people think preaching God’s Word with authority is prideful?

Because we have confused uncertainty with humility.

People think that what it means to be humble is to be timid, to be tentative in our conclusions, to speak with a level of uncertainty.

The truly humble person, however, is certain where the Word of God has spoken clearly to any particular issue.

To pretend we don’t know the truth when God has spoken clearly is not to manifest humility; it’s to manifest pride masquerading as humility.

People who want to whisper when God has shouted aren’t being humble; they’re being proud.

If we are contrite of spirit, we aren’t certain about ourselves, our opinions, our thoughts, and so on.

In fact, we discount everything about ourselves because we know our sinfulness.

But when God has spoken, we are not uncertain because we tremble at His Word.

Now, certainly some people can be pompous in their handling of Scripture, because we know that knowledge puffs up.

But uncertainty is no indication of humility, and conviction is not to equated with pride.

* + - * 1. This passage describes our inner-attitude of humility, but what does this look like in practice?
      1. We see an illustration of this in Philippians 2:3…
         1. Do you see how Paul sets selfishness as a contrast to humility?

The person who is selfish is proud.

He might walk around with an external humility, like the Pharisees did when they wanted people to know they were fasting.

But people who do what they do to serve themselves or to bring honor and glory to themselves are not humble people no matter how they might appear to others.

* + - * 1. True humility, Paul says, regards others as more important than yourselves.

Humility before God means we submit everything in life to the Word of God.

And humility toward others means that we regard their desires and their needs as more important than our own.

And in this remarkable passage of Scripture, who is the ultimate example of humility?

The Lord Jesus Christ!

He manifested the ultimate humility when He came into the world as a slave and humbled Himself to the point of dying on a cross for our sins.

Jesus was not looking out for His own interests when He came, but He came for our sakes.

And although He was exalted, as Psalm 138:6 says, He regarded the lowly to die in their place.

* + - * 1. When Paul calls us to cultivate the virtue of humility in our lives, then, he really is calling us to nothing less than being like the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are called to walk as He walked in 1 John 2:6.

And we know that Jesus came and lived a humble life, because He said that He came not to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many.

1. Conclusion
   1. As Christians, we would all say that we want to emulate Christ, that we want to walk worthy of Him.
      1. But here’s where the rubber meets the road: Do we see ourselves as part of the body of Christ in community and fellowship with imperfect people saved by the grace of God?
      2. And in the context of our life together as those called of God, are we cultivating humility in our lives?
         1. One of the best places to look for this is in our closest relationships.
         2. Husbands, do you seek to cultivate humility in your marriage, so that you lead your family according to God’s Word and regard your wife and her needs as more important than your own?
         3. What about you wives? Do you live with your husband in such a way that you do things out of selfishness, or do you seek to look out for his needs as you follow his leadership?
         4. Paul is coming to the family in chapters 5-6, and it’s no wonder when we think about this call to cultivate humility that the home is one place where Paul puts us to the test!
         5. What about in the context of the body of Christ?
         6. Do we grumble and complain when things in the church don’t go the way we want them to, according to our preferences and desires?
         7. Or do we manifest humility and seek to encourage and edify others, regarding them as more important than ourselves?
         8. I think humility is one of the most difficult virtues to cultivate because it’s so easy to slip into a proud mindset without even realizing it.
         9. What seems like a small, little complaint, or a little act of self-service, can in reality be a symptom of a massive problem of pride.
   2. But it is the gospel of Christ that enables us to be humble, isn’t it?
      1. It’s the reminder that we were once aliens and strangers, without God in the world, walking under the power of the devil.
      2. It’s the reminder that the only thing that intervened to change our course was that little phrase in Ephesians 2:4 – But God.
      3. It’s the reminder that we have been saved by grace as a gift, and not even our faith was of ourselves, but it all has come from God, because we are His workmanship.
      4. When we have our feet firmly planted in the realities of Eph 1-3, then we are ready to hear the call of Ephesians 4:1-2, to walk worthy of our calling as members of Christ’s body by cultivating a heart of humility.
      5. Well, we have quite a bit more to go, but we’ll have to save it for next time…