

**Sermons**  
**Walk Worthy!**  
**Ephesians 4:1**  
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*Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher*  
*Countryside Bible Church, Southlake, Texas*

I was thinking this week and was reminded of the fact that there are always people who fail to live up to their high position in this world. Perhaps the most infamous example of our times is Prince Phillip. Prince Phillip is the husband of the Queen of England. He is a man who unwittingly, unintentionally, consistently behaves and speaks in a way that is unbecoming of the high position that he holds. To read what he has said, reads as a joke book.

This week I read several quotes from his life. Here's an example. At the opening ceremony of the city hall in the magnificent city of Vancouver, he was asked to speak. And on that auspicious occasion, he said this: "I declare this thing open - whatever it is!" During a visit to an aborigine tribe in Australia in 2002, just a few short years ago, he asked the tribe leader of that particular aboriginal tribe, "So, are you chaps still throwing spears at other tribes?" When he visited the Sudan, **he went** to an art museum of the Sudanese artists. And after he had finished viewing all of the art there in the museum at the exhibit, he said this, "If you gave a 7-year-old a brush and paints, he'd produce something like that." When **the French** Minister of the Interior was visiting England, Prince Philip said to this French diplomat, "It's too bad you sent your royal family to the guillotine, isn't it?" As Sheila said at that exact moment, that French minister was probably thinking, "No, it wasn't so bad after all!"

My favorite example was from 1981. Britain was suffering terrible economic hardship, perhaps equal to what it's suffering today. There was terrible unemployment. And Prince Phillip was being interviewed on a television program and he was asked his thoughts about the unemployment situation. Of course, there were hundreds of thousands of Britons that were out of work and were in desperate times. And when he was asked to share his thoughts about their unemployment, this is what he said back in 1981, "You know a few years ago, everybody was saying, 'We must have more leisure. Everybody is working too much.' Now, that everybody's got more leisure, they're complaining that they're unemployed. People just don't seem to be

able to make up their minds what they want, do they?" Sounds a whole lot like, "Let them eat cake!"

Why are those comments so tragic? Why are they so off-putting? It's because they're terribly inappropriate for someone in his position to be making. As I thought about that this week, as I read those quotes, I thought, you know, as humorous as those examples are, sadly, the behavior of many Christians is just as inappropriate for the position that they enjoy as sons and daughters of God.

In the passage that we come to this morning, Paul urges all of us to make sure that we live in a way that is appropriate to our high calling, to our high position in Christ. Today, we come again to our study of Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus and to the churches in the surrounding cities of Asia minor. It's been a great year in our time of study on each Sunday morning. Although we've taken a few breaks to look at a number of special series like the one we just completed on Christian liberty, most of the year has been attributed and devoted to working our way through the first half of this great magnificent letter.

Today marks a major milestone because we will begin the second half of Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus. In the second half, Paul turns to apply the truths that he taught in the first half. In the first half of the letter, he has shown us God's great eternal plan. In the second half, he intends to show us how that knowledge should affect our daily lives. Chapters 1-3 deal with our position. Chapters 4-6 with our practice. Chapters 1-3 are proclamation. Chapters 4-6 are application. Chapters 1-3 are theology and chapters 4-6 are ethics. As it's often described, chapters 1-3 are the indicative, that is, statements about ourselves and God and what He has accomplished. Chapters 4-6 are imperative, that is, commands. In fact, chapters 1-3, the entire first half of the book, has only one imperative, one command **in those** three chapters. It's found in chapter 2:11: "Remember". But when you come to chapter 4:1 through the end of the book, there is a staccato series of imperatives or command - imperative after imperative, command after command. And that's where we come today.

Now, notice in chapter 4:1, the word that begins the second half of this letter is the important word, “therefore”. It’s really **an** amazing word. It’s a lot like the word we saw in chapter 2 where we’re told what we used to be and then Paul says, “But God”. Those two little words are so filled with meaning. The same is true with this word, “therefore”. And as we begin our time together this morning, I want to briefly consider the far-reaching, profound implications of that little but vital word “therefore”. This isn’t my message where I ultimately want to get this morning. This is just sort of introduction. Alright? But I want you to get this because there are far-reaching implications in that word “therefore”. Let me just give you a brief list.

Number one: it is a powerful reminder that the entire Bible must be read in its context. The Bible must be read in its context. Paul intended chapters 4-6 to be intimately connected to chapters 1-3. He intended to build on what he had taught. He intended that these commands be given and offered in the context of the indicatives of the first three chapters. And if you take these commands out of their context, they can be easily distorted. So, it’s a reminder, here at the very start that you and I, when we read our Bibles, must read our Bibles in its context - each verse and its context. Remember that the Bible was not originally broken into verses or chapters. That’s there for our convenience. It was written in books, and we are to look at each of those books as one unit, communicating a specific theme. And we must look at each verse in the context of that overall theme.

There’s a second implication of this little word “therefore”. It’s that good works are the fruit of salvation, not the cause. Good works are the fruit of salvation, not the cause. As Marcus Bart, one of the commentators on this book wrote, “Before God demands anything of man, He gives grace and salvation.” It’s exactly what you see in Ephesians. The first three chapters are all about what God did. And once he has communicated to us what God has done in our lives, then he tells us what we must do in response.

Number three: Christ is not only crucial to salvation, but He is also key to sanctification as well. Now, this one isn’t as readily apparent as the others. But it’s interesting if you look at the names of Jesus in the Book of Ephesians, one of the names of Jesus, that is, “Jesus Christ our Lord” occur, those together, occur 88 times in the Book of Ephesians. Those names occur more

frequently (and this is a remarkable thing, a surprising thing) - those names occur more frequently in the second half of this letter, in the practical-living-application side of this letter, than in the first half. And that's because Christ is not just good for salvation... You know, some people live in the world, and I was brought up in churches where basically Christ is what you need to get saved. But once you get saved, you move beyond Christ, and you start to take things up on your own. The implication of this word "therefore" and what appears on both sides, is that Christ is not only part of God's great eternal plan in saving us, but Christ is part of God's great eternal plan in sanctifying us as well. You never get beyond Christ as a Christian.

Number four: right doctrine, right doctrine, is foundational to Christian living. Right doctrine is foundational to Christian living. As Paul gets to the practical Christian living in chapters 4-6, he builds that on the foundation of the doctrine he's taught in the first three chapters. Christian living is nothing other than the application of doctrine to life. The path to Christian maturity, then, is marked by a deeper and deeper understanding of the doctrine.

We saw this in Ephesians already, didn't we? As Paul lays out those beautiful words in the first chapter, as he talks about the blessings we enjoy, the spiritual blessings that are ours in Christ, what does he pray for the Ephesians? Look at chapter 1:18: "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will [underline this word] know [I want you to come to full, deep understanding of] what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, [and verse 19] and [I want you to know] what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe..." Paul's concern was that we would know because right doctrine is the foundation from which a Christian life grows to maturity.

He prays the same thing, by the way, at the end of chapter 3. We just saw a couple of weeks ago, where he prays in verse 17 of chapter 3: "so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend [there's another one of those words for knowledge, for understanding, for grasping] with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth [of the love of Christ]." Right doctrine is the foundation to Christian living.

Number five: right doctrine is empty without right practice. Right doctrine is empty without right practice. He doesn't stop at the end of chapter 3 and say, "*Amen*", and write no more. He moves from the doctrine to practical Christian living. God expects us to act on what we know. Our Lord said that didn't He? In **John** 13:17, He said, "If you know these things, you are blessed if [what?] you do them."

You see, there are two opposite temptations we face as Christians. Some Christians absolutely love doctrine. They love to read and study the first half of Ephesians. Some of you are going to find this hard to believe, but they read systematic theologies on their lunch break. They actually know what supralapsarianism is. And the temptation for those who love doctrine, is to read the first three chapters of this book and love it. And when they come to chapter 4:1, they say to themselves, "Yeah, yeah, I know all that. Let's go to Romans 10 and study election." If you love doctrine, you've probably hated to see us come to the end of chapter 3.

But there's another temptation. There are those other Christians who love application. They love to read and study the second half of this letter. They just start at chapter 4:1. Their libraries are filled with how-to books - how to be a better husband, how to be a better wife, how to communicate better. They're only mildly interested in doctrine, if at all. To them, soteriology is an infection that you take antibiotics to get rid of. If you love application, then you have probably been ready for me to be done with the first three chapters, so that we can get to the good stuff.

With this little word "therefore", that marks the middle of this book, we learned that both of those perspectives are wrong. Both doctrine and practice are equally important. You can't have a house without a foundation. But if all you have is a foundation, you don't have a house. Christian living is the balance of growing in our knowledge and applying that knowledge to our daily lives.

Number six: sanctification is not an experience, but a process. Sanctification is not an experience, but a process. It is not something that just happens to you in a moment of time. It is not a holy zap. You're sitting in a service, and boom, zap, you're holy! Wouldn't it be

wonderful if that's how it happened? But that isn't how it **happens**. It's not an experience but it's a command. It's an imperative.

There's a popular misunderstanding about sanctification, the process of becoming more like Jesus Christ, that I was exposed to a lot when I was growing up. And that popular misunderstanding says, "You just need to let go and let God!" All you need to do is surrender and God will take care of everything else. If that were true, then Paul wasted a lot of ink and a lot of time writing the second half of this letter.

When I was growing up, I attended churches where the pastors were well-intentioned, but there were essentially two messages. They had two messages. They could preach one of these two messages from any text, but essentially there were two messages. There was the message of the gospel - "Get saved! You need to become a Christian. Repent and believe!" - which is a wonderful message. And the second message was, "You need to surrender. You need to surrender your life to Christ." The clear implication was that if I would simply surrender my life to Christ, as a Christian, then after that everything would take care of itself, and I'd be fine. That would be like this sort of magic pill. That's a skewed perspective. It's skewed because it separates salvation from sanctification, as if they could be separated. That's what the lordship battle has been all about. And the second way it's skewed, is that you haven't fulfilled your responsibilities in sanctification when you surrender your life to Christ. Sanctification is a lifelong process that requires your maximum effort, and it is a sustained effort to obey specific commands of Scripture in daily life, using the strength of the Spirit. So, those are some observations that jumped out at me as I looked at that little word "therefore" - powerful, far-reaching implications.

But I want to leave the word "therefore", and I want to help you understand the structure of the rest of this letter. You see Ephesians 4:1 is, if you remember your English lessons from school, it is a topic sentence. It is a sentence that sets the direction, not only for the paragraph it begins (verses 1-16 of chapter 4), but it's also a topic sentence for the rest of the letter - the entire rest of the letter of Ephesians. Ephesians 4:1 gives us the general, overarching imperative that flows out of everything Paul has taught in the first three chapters. The rest of chapters 4-6 give us the

specifics, the specific imperatives, that flow out of this general overarching imperative in chapter 4:1. So, think of it this way. Chapter 4:1 is a topic sentence for the rest of the letter. It is a hinge, as well, between chapters 1 and 3 and chapters 4-6. It is a hinge between our position and Christ and our practice, between knowing God's great, eternal plan and living out its implications in our lives.

With that in mind, look at chapter 4:1. I want us to examine it together in the time we have remaining this morning. Paul writes, "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called..." Every Christian must walk in a manner worthy of his calling. We must all live in a way that honors the calling, the position, that we enjoy.

Now, how can we do that? Well, in a sense, the rest of the letter is the answer to that question. But Paul here in this verse, in this crucial hinge verse, introduces us to and identifies four elements of a worthy walk. Four elements of a worthy walk. You want to walk worthy of the calling you've received, then you need to understand and embrace these things. Let's look at them together.

The first element we'll the motives of a worthy walk. The motives of a worthy walk. Notice how he begins: "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you..." What should drive us to walk in a way that's worthy of the calling, the position we have? Paul gives us two motives here. The first motive is the source of the command itself - the source of the command. Notice the source: "I, the prisoner of the Lord". Obviously, that's a reference to Paul, but it's a pretty unusual reference. He doesn't say, "*Since I, Paul*". He says, "I, the prisoner of the Lord." That has to be important to him in this context. And I think it is important because, buried within that phrase, are a couple of ideas.

First of all, it speaks of Paul as the one who has sacrificed himself for us as Gentiles. Think about it. He's a prisoner. Paul is not here using subtle or not so subtle manipulation. He was not using the kind of proverbial guilt trip that older relatives can be tempted to use to get what they want. For Paul, this is just a matter of fact. He is a prisoner. Look back at chapter 3:1:

“For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles...” Paul says, *“I’m in prison and I’m in prison for your sakes.”* When Paul wrote this letter, he was literally in a Roman prison. Why? Well, he alludes to it here in chapter 3:1. It was for the sake of Gentile believers.

But if you really want to see what it was all about, you have to turn back to Acts 21. Acts 21 - we looked at this passage a number of weeks ago. Let me just remind you of it. Acts 21 - you remember Paul goes to Jerusalem. And the brothers in the Jerusalem church say, *“There’s some question about whether or not you’re still respecting the law of Moses. So, just to ensure and assure your Christian brothers, who are Jewish, that you still respect the law of Moses, why don’t you join in, with these that are taking a vow, and prove that to them?”* So (verse 26), Paul agrees: “Then Paul took the men, and the next day, purifying himself along with them, went into the temple giving notice of the completion of the days of purification, until the sacrifice was offered for each one of them.” So, he’s following this ritual from the Old Testament Mosaic law, to prove that he still respects the law of Moses.

Verse 27: “When the seven days were almost over, the Jews from Asia [Minor. These now are unbelieving Jewish people from Asia Minor], upon seeing him in the temple [specifically, they saw him in the court of Israel, the court where only Jewish people could go], began to stir up all the crowd...” So, they’re in the courtyard - huge numbers of people. They seized Paul. They stir up the crowd, crying out (verse 28), “crying out, ‘Men of Israel, come to our aid! This is the man who preaches to all men everywhere against our people and the Law and this place; [and then they get to the heart of their concern] and besides he has even brought Greeks [Gentiles] into the temple and has defiled this holy place.’ For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple.”

So, here you have this uproar in the temple, and what’s it about? Why does Paul end up being arrested? He ends up being arrested because of his ministry to Gentiles and, even very specifically, to the Ephesian church. He had brought someone from the Ephesian church, with him to Jerusalem. And that person, Trophimus, was the cause of the uproar, although, **it was** unfounded. They accused him of bringing a Gentile into the court of Israel and defiling the



temple. So, Paul says, “*I am a prisoner of the Lord for your sakes.*” By referring to himself as a prisoner, he’s reminding them that ultimately, he’s on their side. He has their best interests at heart, and he has clearly proven that.

But this phrase “the prisoner of the Lord” contains another idea that I think is even more important. It’s not just about his love and concern for them. It also reminds us that these words he’s sharing with us, are not suggestions. They are not suggestions from an old friend. They are orders. They are orders from the Lord Jesus Christ through His apostle, His sent one. You see, the rest of **this** letter, is a series of moral imperatives. They come from a man whose entire life was lived out of concern for us, as well as for the Ephesians.

But that isn’t the real reason they should listen. Ultimately, these commands come from his Lord of whom he is a prisoner. Notice he says, “*I am a ’prisoner of the Lord’*”. Paul may have been in a Roman prison when he wrote this letter, but he wasn’t a prisoner of the Roman empire. He was a prisoner of Jesus Christ. And so, the command in chapter 4:1 comes from his Lord: walk worthy because Christ commands it.

It reminds me **of** Paul’s comment to the Corinthians that they are not their own. We are not our own. We are what? Bought with a price. He says, “*Listen. You’re slaves! You have no right to live the way you want to live.*” That’s really what he’s saying to the Ephesians and to us here - “*You don’t belong to yourself. You have no right. You’re a prisoner of the Lord just like I am. You may not be incarcerated in a Roman prison, but you’re the Lord’s prisoner and it’s not your right to choose to live the way you want to live.*” That’s a motive for a worthy walk.

There’s a second motive that he gives us here, and that’s his heartfelt plea. His heartfelt plea. He’s genuinely concerned for us as he was for the Ephesians. Notice **he says**, “*I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you...*” It’s an interesting expression. Paul had the authority to command obedience, and he often does command obedience. But it shows his heart and ultimately the heart of our Lord when instead of issuing orders, he appeals to us, he pleads with us. The Greek word “implore” here is used over 100 times in the New Testament. It means to exhort or to encourage. In this context, it means to exhort or to appeal to those who have been taught the

truth, to apply it to their lives - "*I plead with you*", Paul says, "*to put what I've taught you into practice.*"

Paul often did this. This was really at the heart of his ministry. Even in Romans (you remember his letter to the Romans), there's this same sort of transition verse. In the first eleven chapters, he deals with the doctrine of sin, the doctrine of salvation, the doctrine of sanctification, the doctrine of God's sovereignty in election. And then after all those 11 chapters, he begins chapter 12:1 with this same sort of expression, doesn't he? "*I urge you. I plead with you. I beseech you because of the mercies God has shown you to present yourselves as living sacrifices.*" Paul spoke these words out of genuine personal concern. He's pleading with us. This is in our best interest, as well as a command from our Lord. So, those are the motives of a worthy walk.

That brings us to the second element I want you to see here and that's the mandate of a worthy walk. The mandate of a worthy walk. He mandates it - "[I want] you to walk in a manner worthy of the [your] calling." While it comes as a plea, it has behind it the concept of a command: "walk like this". Paul loves to use this image of walking for the Christian life. He uses it often. Even right here in Ephesians, back in chapter 2:10, he says that good works are those in which we are to walk. Chapter 4:17: Don't walk like the Gentiles walk, but instead (chapter 5:2), walk in love. Verse 8 of chapter 5 he says, "you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light..." Verse 15 of chapter 5: "...be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise..."

He loves this idea of picturing the Christian life as a walk, and that's because, implied in the idea of walking, are several important issues. It implies a destination. You see, when you and I walk today because we have vehicles, we often drive to get someplace and we walk for, what? For fun or exercise. It's just, we really have nowhere we're going. It's just a meander or a stroll. That isn't what walking was like in the first century. You walked to get somewhere. You walked because there was a destination you were trying to get to. The Christian life is not a meander. It's not a stroll. It has an ultimate goal toward which we're headed, and that goal is to have the moral character of Jesus Christ. We're to walk toward that goal. It implies a predetermined path. The New Testament often describes the Christian life as a path, a path that

has been prescribed for us in the Scripture. It has the idea of personal action - this whole idea of walking. Personal action. You have to put one foot in front of the other. It's not something that happens to you, it's something that you must do.

By the way, chapter 4:1, the pronoun "you" there - "I implore *you*", is plural in the Greek text. It was addressed to every member of the Ephesian congregation - "*I want every one of you*", Paul says, "*to walk. I want you to get involved. Get busy. You get involved in this activity.*"

It also (this idea of walking) implies steady progress. The Christian life is not a sprint. It's not a dash. It's a walk in which there is slow, steady progress toward the destination. But ultimately, Paul loves this image of a walk because it implies something that's done over and over again, step after step, and it forms your direction. And so, he uses this idea of walking to describe our lifestyle, our manner of living or, as some translations translate it, "our conduct, the habits of our lives." He says, "*I want you to walk*". That's Paul's mandate. And when he uses the word "walk", he means all of those things. He means conduct your life in a consistent pattern, that's worthy of your calling.

That brings us to the third element of a worthy walk. We've seen the motives and the mandate. I want you to see the meaning of a worthy walk: "walk in a manner worthy." What does that mean - "in a manner worthy"? That expression is actually one Greek word. It takes several English words to capture it, but it's one Greek word. It's an adverb. I could literally translate it like this: "Walk worthily. Walk worthily."

Now, before I tell you what it means, let me tell you what it doesn't mean. It does not mean that you can earn or merit anything with God by your obedience. Nothing we will ever do will earn one bit of merit with God. In fact, even the rewards we receive, are what? Grace! Everything is grace. So, we can't earn or merit anything with God. That's not what he's saying. Nor is he saying that I can truly be worthy of my salvation. Listen, you will never, and I will never deserve what God has done for us in Christ. That's not what he's saying either. Nor is he saying that I can somehow pay God back for my salvation. I agree with John Piper in his book, "Future

Grace”, where he says, “We’re not to live our lives trying to pay God back.” Listen, that’s a debt you can never repay. That’s not what he’s talking about here either.

So, what does he mean when he says we’re to walk in a manner worthy? Well, the Greek word “worthily” translated here “in a manner worthy”, has a couple of pictures within it. You know, there’s some words that have images or pictures in them in how they were originally used, that help us see **what** the word means and how Paul intends it here. This is one of those words. Let me tell you what the pictures were in the original use of this word.

The first picture - there are two of them. The first picture is that of balancing the scales, because the word worthy is the word from which we get our English word “axiom”. It literally means, in the Greek, to balance the scales, to bring into balance, to make equal. You can see, by the way, why this term was used in math because whatever is on one side of the equals sign in math, has to be an exact equivalent of what’s on the other side of the equals sign. But that isn’t how it was originally used. It wasn’t originally used in math. It was originally used in daily commerce. It was used in the kind of scales you’ve seen, where **there was** a fulcrum and there was **a** place to put whatever you were measuring on one side, and the weights against which you were measuring, on the other. And the two **would** balance each other - literal scales. So, when Paul says that our lifestyle must be worthy, he’s saying that my lifestyle should balance with my privileges. On one side of the scale is my position in Christ, on the other side my lifestyle or my conduct should be equivalent in weight to what I have received. My responsibilities should be commensurate with my privileges.

Paul makes this point using the same word in several other places in the New Testament. Philippians 1:27 he writes, “Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ...” He says if you put your conduct on one side, and the gospel of Christ on the other, they should have an equivalence. They should balance. Colossians 1:10 he makes the same point: “[I want] you to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord...” If you put the gift you’ve received of God on one side and your walk, your daily life, on the other, they should balance. 1 Thessalonians 2:11 Paul says, “you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you...” Here’s our word again, by the way. He talks to this young church

in Thessalonica, and he says, “you know how we were [I was] exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children [and here’s what I was exhorting you, verse 12], so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” Put the God who has called you and the kingdom into which you’ve been called on one side of the scales, and your walk should be balancing with that. It should match that. That’s one picture: balancing the scales - this idea of worthy.

But there’s another picture buried in this word “worthy”. It means to be appropriate or, literally, to match. The image here is of literally matching something - like clothing, colors and styles. Now, I admit to you that I’m not always personally alert to when things don’t match (colors or patterns), but I’m learning because I live in a home with four females, most of whom have a refined sense of what matches and what doesn’t. So, Men, you can appreciate this. I hate it when I hear the dreaded question: “How does this look?” How do you answer that question? Or the corollary is almost as bad: “Does this match?” Now, that puts me in an impossible situation. Does this match? Because if I say, “No”, that’s bad. But if I say, “Yes”, and then later she finds out it doesn’t match, that’s worse.

But even I can tell when some things just don’t match, either the colors or the styles. They just weren’t meant to be together. And the same thing is true in our spiritual lives, and that’s why he uses this word that means “to be appropriate”, “to match one thing with another”. Some attitudes and words and behaviors just don’t match our position in Christ.

I love how Paul says it in Titus 2. He says, “[I want you to] adorn the doctrine of God...” You know what he really says? “*I want you to put the right clothes, the clothes that match, the new person you are in Christ.*” Paul doesn’t want there to be a clash between our doctrine and our lives.

Let me ask you this morning: does your lifestyle, does your manner of living, does how you live during the week match the doctrine you hold to? Does what you say you believe match how you live? Do the scales balance between who you are in Christ and the decisions you make day in

and day out? It ought to. That's what Paul is admonishing us to do here: walk in a manner worthy.

But how do I know? How do I know if I'm walking in a worthy manner? What is my walk to be weighed against? Well, that brings us to a fourth element: the measure of a worthy walk. The measure of a worthy walk. He says, "[I want you to] walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called..." You see, our consistent lifestyle, our daily walk, must measure up to our calling. On one side of the scales: our daily walking conduct. On the other side: the calling with which we've been called. They must balance. They must match.

Now, what does this mean - "our calling". Well, this week I had the opportunity to look through the New Testament again for all those times when this expression is used. Often in the New Testament, Christians are called one word. They're referred to by one word: the "called". They are called. What does that mean?

Whenever you see, in the context of the New Testament, the word "called" or "calling" it refers to one of two related, but entirely distinct, things. Theologians call, **or** I should say, theologians identify two different kinds of calls. One they call the general call. The other is the effectual call. The general call and the effectual call. The general call is simply the proclamation of the gospel message. Every time somebody explains, teaches, preaches the gospel, there is the general call. Every time an unregenerate person encounters the gospel, God is calling, as it were, that person through that message to believe the good news. There is a general call issued to all who hear: "Repent and believe!" But there's also a second kind of call in New Testament. It is the effectual call. Don't let the word effectual scare you. It just means effective. It means it does what it's sent out to do. It's a call that works. Wayne Grudem defines it like this in his systematic theology: "The effectual call is an act of God the Father, speaking through the human proclamation of the gospel, in which He summons people to Himself in such a way that they respond in saving faith." So it's not the general call that sometimes can fall on deaf ears. People can say, "No, thanks!" and walk away. The effective call, or the effectual call, is when God uses the message and through that message, actually summons somebody to Himself.

You can see this in Romans 8. Turn over to Romans 8 for a moment. In the very familiar passage, Romans 8:28, a verse we quote often says, "...that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God [that's one description of Christians. And then he gives another description of Christians], to those who are [here it is] called [that's us] according to His purpose." And then notice how he describes this calling: "For those whom He [God] foreknew [that's God's eternal, electing purpose], He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son...[so, when God chose people for Himself, He decided beforehand, He destined them beforehand, that they would someday be conformed to the image of His Son] and these whom He predestined, He also called [so, those whom God chose in eternity past, He called]; and these whom He called [all of the called], He also justified [this is obviously a different kind of "called". This isn't just the general call of the gospel message that goes to out to everybody. Here, everybody He calls in this way, He ends up justifying. And everybody He ends up calling and justifying, in this way]; and these whom He justified, He also glorified." This is the effectual call. This is the effectual call. It actually works.

If you want to see what this looks like, both of these calls together, look at 1 Corinthians 1, **1 Corinthians 1:18**. Paul talks about his preaching. He says, "For the word [the message] of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." Go down to verse 22: "For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom [He says, 'Here's what we do']; but we preach Christ crucified." Paul says, "*I preach, and what happens? Well, there are Jews who see what I preach as a stumbling block and there are Gentiles who see it as foolishness.*" It's the Greek word from which we get the word "moronic". They see it as moronic. So, here he is preaching, extending a general call, "Believe in Christ. Trust Him for forgiveness of sins and salvation". And **there are** those who hear the general call that are Jewish and say, "*I don't want any of that - that's a stumbling block, a crucified Messiah.*" And there are Gentiles who hear it and say, "*I don't think so. That looks moronic to me. God dying?*" "but (verse 24) to those who are [here it is again] the called..." Here's the effectual call, the effective call. The message goes out about Christ crucified to the called, both Jews and Greeks, and Christ becomes the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Here's how it works. An unregenerate person is dead. They come into a service like this. They hear a message in which the gospel is presented that if a man will turn from his sin and embrace Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, he'll enjoy forgiveness. And it goes right over their heads. It seems completely irrelevant. I sat in services and came to that conclusion. You probably did as well. But then something else happens. That's the general call. Time after time, we heard the general call, "Repent and believe! Be saved!". But then that same person, perhaps, sits in a service like this, and something entirely different happens. Rather than a general call, God issues an effective, effectual call, something miraculous. Robert Raymond describes it like: "Mysteriously, imperceptively, he no longer hears simply the voice of the preacher. Instead, what he now hears is also the voice of God summoning him into fellowship with His Son. And he responds to Christ in faith." "What happened?" Raymond writes. The Scriptures would say that God has effectively or effectually called an elect sinner to Himself. Maybe you remember the day, when the gospel was more than a general call to you, that you ignored. But it was an effective call that reached into your heart and summoned you to God. You were called.

By the way, that was all grace. 2 Timothy 1, or excuse me, 2 Timothy 1:9 says, "who [God] has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity..." This was because of election in eternity past, and it was all grace. He called you. What did He use? Well, He uses the Word of God. 2 Thessalonians 2:14 says, "It was for this He called you through our gospel..." Same gospel message that gives the general call, but sometimes it's presented and God gives the effectual call and draws that person to Himself.

Now, go back to Ephesians. Here's Paul's point. I don't want you to miss this. Paul's point is: if you are a Christian, you have been called by God. You are a Christian because you have been called by God. He has summoned you. He has summoned you into His family. So, now live in a way that brings honor on your new family and on your new Father. That's what he's saying. Walk worthy of your calling. You've been called by God. Live like you belong to Him!

The last passage I want you to turn to, as we close, is 1 Peter. 1 Peter 1. Peter got it. He understood it. Listen to how he put it. 1 Peter 1:14: "As obedient children, do not be conformed



to the former lusts [cravings] which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, ‘YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.’” **You know what** he’s saying? You’re the child of a Holy Father who called you. He summoned you into fellowship with Himself. He summoned you into His family. He drew you to Himself. Now, start living up to the family name! Walk worthy of your calling! Honor the Father who has done such amazing things to you and for you. Walk in a manner worthy of your calling!

Let’s pray together.

Father, we are amazed at Your grace that You would call us, undeserving sinners, into fellowship with You and with Your Son, into the kingdom of Christ, into a new family relationship in which we belong to You as adopted children. Oh God, help us to live in a way that’s worthy of our calling, that matches that amazing position we now enjoy in Christ. Father, help us to see, in the weeks to come, what that looks like in real life, as we study the rest of this great letter. Give us a heart, our Father, give us a heart that longs to live in a way that’s worthy of the calling with which You have called us. We pray it in Jesus’ name, Amen!