

Ephesians 4:1-6

Ephesians  
*Walk This Way*

In the Gospel of Matthew we read about a unique event in the life of Jesus. He takes Peter, James and John, the inner circle of disciples, the ones He was closest to, and brings them up to the top of a mountain. They're all standing there and suddenly, the Bible says, Jesus is transfigured before them.

He actually appears to them in the way that he would appear after his death, resurrection and glorification. And at the same time Moses and Elijah are there talking with Jesus.

This is a tremendous mountain top experience for Peter and the other 2. Peter said to Jesus, *"Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters--one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."*

In effect Peter was saying, "Man, this is great. Lets hang out here, it's so wonderful. I know what's going on down at the foot of the mountain. There's all this misery and pain in the world. It sure is nice up here. Can't we stay on top of the mountain?"

But then, the Bible says, *While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"*

And the 3 disciples drop to the ground. They're terrified. Then Jesus says, *Get up and do not be afraid.*

Matthew records, *When they looked up, they saw no-one except Jesus.*

The very the next thing that happens is, Jesus is leading them down the mountain side where they are confronted by a man and his son who has seizures where he throws himself into fire and rivers and the father's pleading for help.

Jesus wasn't about to consent to their proposal to build shelters and camp out up on the mountain top. There was lots of work to be done.

Now, if you've been here the past several weeks as we've studied the Book of Ephesians you might be feeling a little like Peter in a few minutes.

This morning we've come to a transition in our study of Ephesians. And it's a little like having to walk down off a mountain top and having to face the world again.

We've just finished describing all these fantastic spiritual blessings which believers have in Christ. We've just gone over that amazing section at the end of Chapter 3 where having been strengthened with God's might, and by faith we've been able to apprehend the dimensions of the love of Christ which passes knowledge that we might be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now as we begin chapter 4 we begin a series of challenges to take all of what we have in Christ and begin to use it.

Ephesians is going to turn from what God has done to what we must do, from lofty theology to its down-to-earth, concrete implications in every day life.

We're always led down the mountainside to face life, and yet I believe that what Peter and James and John saw on the mountain played an integral part in shaping the rest of their lives. They needed that knowledge, that comprehension of Jesus Christ before they could continue serving Him.

And that's the way the Apostle Paul, who wrote Ephesians, always handles his letters to the churches. The doctrine, the mountain top, the truth of what we have and are in Christ comes first, and then the practical out working of that in our lives follows.

There are some people that say, "We don't need Bible doctrine. Doctrine sounds so dry and stuffy. Doctrine divides, just look at all the different churches with all the different views on things and how they can't get together. We just need to live like Jesus."

And then there are other people who go the opposite direction. They study the Bible and dig out all kinds of truth and love to discuss and debate the doctrines of the scriptures but when it comes to putting the Bible into practice they seem to think that there's no correlation between Bible truth and their every day life.

Both of those individuals have totally missed it.

So then let's find out how we're supposed to live in light of what Jesus Christ has done for us.

## **Turn to Ephesians chapter 4 pg. 1039**

### *I. We Are To Live In A Way That Is Worthy Of Our Calling*

#### **Read vs 1**

Sometimes you'll hear people say you can make the Bible say anything you want. That's only true if you disregard the most basic rules of interpretation.

One thing that will help you understand what a passage is saying is identifying key words. Key words are words that stand out as very important to a correct understanding of a verse or a passage from the Bible. These key words need to be marked and defined so that you can really understand the point of the passage.

Some times, like in a narrative section in the Old Testament, you might only have one or two key words in a whole chapter.

Other times, like in this letter to the Ephesians one verse might be packed with key words. Chapter 4 and verse 1 is one of those jammed packed verses. In fact, I would identify at least 6 key words in this verse. 6 words, each one crucial to understanding the meaning of the verse.

The first one I would identify is the word "therefore." Martin Lloyd Jones who was pastor of Westminster Chapel in London preached a series on the book of Ephesians and he preached a whole message on this word "therefore" here in 4:1.

Of course the word "therefore" means "because of" or on "account of" and it ties the two halves of this letter together.

There's no legitimate way that you can separate what you believe from how you live. It's like Paul uses this word "therefore" to lead us along. You might say he takes us by the hand and says "follow me."

He leads us, just like Jesus lead his disciples down that mountain side. He brings us down to where we live, but he makes it clear that where we live is rooted in our position in Christ.

The next key word in verse 1, is the word "prisoner." Paul was a prisoner of the Lord.

He was in jail for his preaching. He was subject to the whims of one of the most wicked and perverse men that ever lived, the emperor Nero.

Now, the thing that makes this word “prisoner” so significant is that Paul is right here in the thick of the battle. He’s not sitting back in a plush air conditioned office, with his feet upon his desk saying to people, “Hey, you guys need to live for Jesus.”

God’s about to use Paul to challenge us right in the middle of some areas that we probably fail at the most. He’s about to hit us right between the eyes with one of the biggest problems in the church, whether it’s 1st century or 21st century.

But when we see Paul imprisoned for his faith we can say: “Paul your the type of guy that can challenge me.”

“Your living a day by day commitment to Jesus Christ. You know what it means to submit to the lordship of Christ in your life. Even while your in prison your walking with the Lord, you call yourself a prisoner of the Lord, you haven’t lost heart, you know that God is in control. If anybody has earned the right to exhort me it’s you.”

The 3rd word that stands out in vs. 1 is the word “beseech.”

“Because of the blessing of God, I the prisoner of the Lord beseech you...”

Notice, he doesn’t say, “I command you.” Moses did that. The Old Testament law did that. The Mosaic law said “do this and do that, and if you don’t you’re in big trouble!” The law didn’t lead people into holiness it drove them. It used threats and penalties.

Paul didn’t preach law, He didn’t carry a club. He preached grace. And here he’s using God’s goodness, God’s blessings, God’s compassion to draw people into serving the Lord and so he says “I beseech you, I exhort you, I urge you, on the basis of all that you have and are thru God’s grace.”

Now to what is he calling us? To what is he urging us? The next key word is “walk.”

The Greek term for walk here is *peripateo*. *Peri* means “around.” Ie., periscope, perimeter.

*Pateo* means “to walk.”

So *peripateo* literally means “to walk all around.” In other words, to travel through life. To live.

The 5th key word is the word “worthy.”

The word *axios* literally means to “bring up the beam in a balance scale.”

A balance scale has a beam with a place for weight on each end. You put, say a pound weight on one side and the beam goes down. Then you put whatever material you want to measure out a pound of on the other side until the beam levels off.

Our life, our daily walk, is to be equivalent to something. It's to be of equal weight with the sixth significant term, our “calling.”

If our walk is to be in balance with our calling, and of equal weight with our calling, we need to figure out just what our calling is.

Where do we find out about our call? What's that about? We've already seen it in the first 3 chapters. We've been called to holiness and righteousness, forgiveness, redemption. Our calling is our spiritual blessings.

Our calling is to be seated together with Christ in the heavenlies.

What verse one is, is an urgent appeal to believers in Christ that they bring their every day living up in line with their high calling. That their practice and their position line up. That their standing and their state might be equal.

The key *verse* in Ephesians is back in chapter 1 and verse 10 which tells us that God is bringing all things under the headship of Christ. Christians are all children of the same Heavenly Father, fellow citizens of the same kingdom and part of the same body. The overall theme of the book is unity.

When we get to 4:3, we see that unity is the forefront of God's priorities.

And so Paul's appeal in verse one for a worthy walk really is a call to unity among believers.

The challenge in verse 3 (and we'll get back to verse 2 in a few minutes)

### **Read 3**

Keep your daily walk as a Christian in balance with your calling by endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit.

In forming the church, God eliminated the greatest division that had ever existed between human beings - the rift between Jews and Gentiles. In Christ Jesus those distinctives were abolished. That's been the dominant theme of the first 3 chapters. But now how would this work out in their life together? Apparently there was some real antagonism between these two groups in Ephesus.

This is the kind of thing that leads to church splits and denominationalism.

Before you know it, there would be two rival churches in Ephesus - the "Hebrew Messianic Church" and the "first Church of the Gentiles."

Talk about coming down off the mountain top and getting into the nitty gritty of life.

Whether it's racial or cultural problems, whether it's fighting and bickering and unforgiving Christians, unity is the heart of the Christian message and God's program for the church.

William McDonald writes "There's enough of the flesh in every one of us to wreck any local church or any work of God" and how true that is.

Just read these letters to the early congregations and you'll see that people have been the same from day one. In Corinth there were groups of believers rallying around certain strong personalities in the church. In Philippi there was quarreling and bickering between women in the church. And in Ephesus it was a racial problem.

This is so practical for us. Our society is becoming more and more fragmented.

And what our society needs desperately is a model of the true unity and stability that only God can produce.

Our world may have no idea where to look for a society that builds bridges instead of barriers and operates on the basis of service rather than selfishness, but that's what God intends for his church to be.

Now notice a couple of things about this unity according to verse 3. Unity isn't something we produce, it's something we're told to keep. We can't manufacture this unity - it's the unity of the Spirit. In other words, the Holy Spirit, the third person of the trinity, has already produced this unity.

I Cor. 12:13 says *For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free--and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.*

It's God the Holy Spirit who takes everyone of us the moment we believe and unites together into one body with Christ as the head.

That's why God doesn't tell us to create unity within Christianity, He asks us not to break the unity that's already there. We're to maintain it, not create it.

And there is a real sense of urgency in Paul's words as he writes. The whole concept of "I therefore beseech you" portrays urgency but then in verse 3 we find a word translated "endeavoring."

Webster gives a modern definition of "to try" or "to attempt." The word in the original is a lot stronger.

The original Greek has the word *spoudazo* which means "to push on with something, to be zealous, to give yourself whole heartedly to accomplish a purpose."

The purpose we're to give ourselves to is to "keep" this unity. The word for "keep" is a Greek term that means to guard. In fact the noun form means "a prison."

So then we are to zealously, diligently guard the unity produced by the Holy Spirit in his church. Now at this point you may be saying to yourself, "What unity?"

"If unity has been established we're not supposed to break it, where is this unity?"

Well, in verses 4 - 6 we're given the basis of this unity.

And in a day and age in which there's a tremendous push to try and unify organizations and denominations it's very interesting to note what God says is a basis for unity.

It's not organization, it's not a mechanical unity. It's all based on the truth and the doctrines of the Bible.

Yesterday, in Southhall, in the UK there was what was called a Festival of Festivals at the De Nobili Inter-faith Centre.

This year the Hindu and Sikh feast of lights, the Muslim feast which ends the fast of Ramadan, the Jewish observance of Yom Kippur, the feast of All Saints, the Bahai's commemoration the birth of the Bab, and the Jains celebration of the nirvana of Maha-vira all take place within a month of each other.

De Nobili House celebrated all these festivals with 'quiet prayer and the sharing of food and drink.'

Now in a democracy one of the foundational principles has to be freedom of religion. All of these groups from Catholics to Hindus have a right to worship as they please.

But how do Catholics who believe that Jesus Christ is the virgin born Son of God worship with Hindus, Muslims, and Bahais who say that He wasn't any more than a great prophet?

The only way that happens is if we throw out absolute truth.

The World Council of Churches has been on the forefront of trying to bring all churches and faiths under one banner.

That would be commendable if the approach would be to bring everyone in line with the Bible as they are brought together. The problem is that truth becomes negotiable and basic beliefs are thrown out until the lowest common denominator can be found to get every one together.

All down through church history there have been believers who have put their lives on the line for the truth of the Bible (including the author of Ephesians) and you have to wonder just what their comments would be on today's attempt at union without the unity.

Well Paul doesn't ask for any thing ecumenical instead he goes right back to the true doctrinal foundation for unity.



*I. We Are To Live In A Way That Is Worthy Of Our Calling*

*II. We Are To Live In A Way That Reflects The Truth*

**Read vs 4** *There is one body...*

This is the body of Christ of which each believer is a member. When we realize that our sins have come between us and a Holy God and that our good works can't erase sin. And when we put our faith in Jesus Christ who paid the penalty of our sins in our place, we are not only forgiven, but we are placed into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit.

The one body is to be the model for all local congregations. Scripturally all believers are to be associated with a local church and that local church is to have Christ as its head.

But all denominations, sects, and parties hinder the outworking of this truth of one body. When the Lord Jesus returns all of these man made divisions will be eliminated.

*There's also one Spirit.* The same Holy Spirit who indwells each believer individually also indwells the body of Christ corporately.

*And then there's one hope.*

Every member of the body is called to share one destiny - to be with Christ, to be like Christ, to share His glory endlessly. Paul told Titus the 2nd coming of Christ in the rapture was the blessed hope. That's a hope we all share in because that's the day every believer is made to be like Christ.

**Read vs 5** *There is one Lord*

Our Lord is the head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ, not Brahman, not Baha'u'llah, not Waheguru.

Paul just couldn't stay away from doctrine could he? He shifts gears, gets thru 3 verses of commands and slips right back into doctrinal truth. There might be a lot of things and individuals worshipped as Lord on this earth but for us there is only one Lord, the Christ of the Bible.

There might be a lot of different Jesus around because people like to make up a Lord that conforms to their own liking.

But for every true believer there is the same biblical Lord Jesus Christ.

Beyond that *there is one faith*.

Some people accuse the Bible of being narrow, and they're right. It is. Jude, Jesus' brother wrote that we should earnestly contend for the faith that was once delivered to the saints.

The early Christians recognized a body of basic doctrine that they taught, guarded, committed to others, contended for, and they often died for.

Christians may differ in some matters of interpretation and church practice but all true Christians agree on "the faith." To depart from "the faith" is to bring about disunity within the body of Christ.

Then, along with one Lord and one faith, is *one baptism*.

There is one Lord in whom we all believe, one faith we all confess and one baptism by which we express our allegiance to Christ.

Paul is saying to the Ephesians there's not two baptism, one for Jews and the other for Gentiles, any more than there's two separate Lords, or two separate faiths.

And then, vs. 6, "there's - **Read 6**

Every believer recognizes one God and Father who is:

Sovereign - He's over all, Powerful - working thru all, Indwelling - He lives in all.

Now notice Paul has used the word "one," 7 times in 3 verses. He's obviously emphasizing the term and see what he's saying?

This is the unity. This is what we're to preserve. It's not a matter of churches chucking out Bible doctrine until there's nothing left to stand on and then call all those groups that can get together at that point a unity.

It's the unity already produced by the Holy Spirit that we are to guard. We are to keep our walk and our calling in balance.

When there's bitterness, or fighting, or antagonism among believers, whether in the same congregation, or the same family, or maybe even between two churches or Christian organizations - we have failed to keep the unity.

Positionally it's there. There's only one body, one Spirit, one Lord, and so on.

But the problem is we are acting as if that isn't true. Our balance beam is way off. It's lopsided.

We're to be eager, we are to be diligently striving to keep this unity. In the mind of God there is one people, joined in one body, thru one faith, in one Lord.

But in every day practice, not only are some Christians not striving for unity with one another, some seem to be just plain old striving with most everybody. And the culture looks out and says, "These are God's people? He must not be much of a God!"

So, how are we going to keep this unity of the Spirit? How are we going to tie this all together and begin to balance out our walk with our calling.

Well, let's go back now to verse 2 and I want us to see God's list of essential attitudes. There's 4 of them. And this is where we're pulled down off the mountaintop and shoved back into the real world because these are the most difficult qualities and attitudes to have. This is the place where we all stumble at times.

And yet this is the very place we need to start. This is the place where all the awesomeness of God and what He's done for us that we saw in the first 3 chapters comes into play. We have to know all of that first.

We have to understand it and appropriate it and then and only then will these essential attitudes be possible.

**Read vs 2** The first one is *all lowliness*.

This is the word that James uses when he says, "God gives grace to the humble." It's

the word that Jesus used when he said "I am meek and lowly heart." This is a quality of Jesus Christ.

Now, Paul probably mentioned his one first because he was writing to Greeks and Greeks considered humility a vice not a virtue. To them it was inconsistent with self respect. But Jesus Christ humbled himself.

That's why in I Corinthians Paul said, to the Greeks the gospel is foolishness. A God who would humble himself was weak. And yet real humility takes divine strength and its essential for unity. Putting others before self.

The 2nd one he lists is *gentleness*.

Numbers 12:3 says that Moses was the meekest man on the face of the earth. Now that might sound like a strange statement because we always picture Moses with his hair blowing in the wind, kind of fire in his eyes as he holds up the commandments on the tablets of stone and preaches to the people.

I think Moses was that kind of guy. He was tough. You had to be to lead those Israelites thru the desert for 40 years.

Moses was strong, but his strength was completely under the control of His Lord. That's meekness. It's strength held in restraint and used in obedience to God. Not to manipulate people and make them do things your way, but to lead and nurture others to go God's way.

The 3rd attitude is described with the word *longsuffering*. The original literally means a "slow burning." Today we'd say having a long fuse. It means an even disposition. A spirit of patience even when you've been provoked.

I told you this was the place we all stumble at times.

Then the 4th is *bearing with one another in love*.

That means making allowance for the faults and failures of others.

That means realizing that people have different personalities, abilities and temperaments. And its not a question of maintaining a facade of courtesy while

inside your boiling with resentment. It means a positive love to those who offend or irritate or disturb.

You know what mission agencies say is the biggest problem that many missionaries wrestle with on the mission field? It's not the climate. It's not the food. It's not the culture. Its not even the language barrier. Its getting along with other missionaries.

Someone asked Gandhi what was the biggest hindrance to Christianity in India and you know what his answer was? Christians.

This is it isn't it? This is the heart of the problem for most believers.

So many times Christian husbands and wives don't know what it means to bear with one another in love. They battle till their marriage falls apart.

Sometimes church members have very little understanding of lowliness and meekness. They're ready to fight with anyone they think treats them wrongly.

Many pastors try to lead their churches with pride and arrogance rather than humble submission to Christ.

And all the while the truth of the unity of the Spirit is buried under an avalanche of self-centeredness.

What's the solution to all of this? Where are these attitudes going to come from in our lives? Galatians 5 says they are all the fruit of the Holy Spirit. They are all the by product of being yielded to the Holy Spirit.

As we realize who we are and how we fit into the plan of God for the ages, as we grasp and apprehend our riches and the love of Christ in all of its fulness we will be drawn into a yieldedness to God's Spirit.

And how we need to be so subject to God and so filled and controlled by the Holy Spirit that He will be producing his characteristics in our life.

Are you yielded to the Holy Spirit today? Are you guarding God's unity through meekness and patience and gentleness? How is your balance this morning? Are you walking worthy of the calling with which you were called?