

The Worthy Walk (Part I)

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There is a prevailing notion in Christian circles today that doctrine is not important. Some may say, "Don't talk to me about doctrine, just let me live my Christian life!" Maybe you have heard, "We don't need doctrine, just the Bible!" Or perhaps you have heard, "Doctrine is not essential nor is it part of the Bible."

- ***How should we as believers respond to such statements? Is doctrine part of the Bible? Is doctrine important for the Christian life and if so, Why?***

Ephesians 4:1-6

1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 [There is] one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

The Call to a Worthy Walk (4:1)

Paul first appeals to believers to walk in a manner worthy of their high calling or position in Jesus Christ.

Therefore in verse 1 is important in that it marks a transition from the first three chapters of Ephesians to the last three chapters. It marks a transition from positional to practical truth, from doctrine to duty, from principle to practice, from creed to conduct, from exposition to exhortation, from the theological to the practical. In the first three chapters of Ephesians Paul was concerned about doctrinal truth. He set forth the believer's position in Christ with all the blessings, honors and privileges of being a child of God. As Paul transitions here, he begins to focus on the consequent obligations, requirements or practices of the believer as a result of the previous doctrinal truth.

- Paul once again refers to himself as *the prisoner of the Lord*. ***Why do you think that he refers to himself in this way again?***

I implore you (parakaleo) comes from the same root as *paraclete*, a comforter, encourager or helper. It literally means "to call to one's side, with the idea of wanting to help or be helped." It connotes an intense feeling or strong desire. Here, Paul is making an urgent plea. He is begging the Ephesians to walk worthily. This intense plea carries the same force as an imperative command. What is Paul begging the Ephesians to do in response to the doctrinal truth taught in chapters 1-3? He is begging them to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which they had been called.

The term *walk* is frequently used in the New Testament. It refers to daily conduct or living. The NIV translates it, "*live*." In fact this seems to be a major theme of the last three chapters of Ephesians as it occurs in (4:1; 4:17; 5:1; 5:8; and 5:15).

- ***According to the following verses, as believers in Christ, How are we to walk (live)?***

4:1

4:17

5:1

5:8

5:15

How does Paul exhort the Ephesian believers to walk in Ephesians 4:1? He exhorts them to walk in a manner worthy of their calling. *Worthy* (axios) is where we get the English word *axiom*. It has the root meaning of "balancing the scales" or "equal weight." In his commentary, John MacArthur says, "It came to be applied to anything that was expected to correspond to something else. A person worthy of his pay was one whose day's work corresponded to his day's wages."

- *In the context of Ephesians 1-3, how does this apply to the Christian life?*

- *In the context of Ephesians 1-3, what is "the calling with which you have been called"?*

- *What do the following verses reveal about this calling?*

1 Thessalonians 2:12

John 6:44

Romans 8:30

Ephesians 1:4

John 15:16

2 Timothy 1:9

The Characteristics of the Worthy Walk (4:2-3)

After appealing to the Ephesian believers to walk in a manner worthy of their high calling, Paul now moves on to identify the characteristics of the worthy walk.

- ***What are the five essential characteristics that he identifies in verses 2 & 3?***

Humility defined-The first characteristic that Paul mentions is humility. Humility comes from a word that literally means to think or judge with lowliness and to have a lowliness of mind. The Greek and Roman cultures despised the idea of humility. They viewed it in a derogatory sense of servility, weakness, or a shameful lowliness. The whole concept of humility was foreign and abhorrent to their way of thinking. There was simply no term in the vocabulary of the Greeks or Romans for the idea of humility. It is likely that Christians coined the term for humility and very possibly it was Paul, himself.

Humility explained-The best place to go in order to accurately understand humility is in the Scripture. There we find that humility is a foundational Christian virtue, which means to put Christ first, others second and self last. It is to consider yourself more lowly than others. John MacArthur says, "Humility is terribly elusive, because if focused on too much it will turn into pride, its very opposite. It is a virtue to be highly sought but never claimed, because once claimed it is forfeited." In other words when you know you have it, you have lost it.

- ***What do the following verses teach regarding humility and its opposite pride?***

Proverbs 16:18

Isaiah 2:11

Isaiah 57:15

Jeremiah 50:31-32

Malachi 4:1

James 4:5

Humility illustrated-There is many examples or illustrations of humility in the Scripture.

- ***Who in the Old Testament illustrates the Biblical virtue of humility and why? Who in the New Testament illustrates the Biblical virtue of humility and why?***

Old Testament Examples:

New Testament Examples:

In the New Testament, John the Baptist is a great example of humility. While at the height of his own ministry and fame as a prophet he says of Jesus, "*I am not fit to remove His sandals*" (Matthew 3:11). He is quoted in John 3:30 in regards to the success of Jesus' ministry, "*He must increase, but I must decrease.*" Clearly John the Baptist was a humble man.

Obviously the ultimate example of humility is Christ Jesus Himself.

First of all He claims humility in Matthew 11:29 He says, "*for I am gentle and humble in heart.*"

Second as John MacArthur notes, "He came to earth as God's Son, yet was born in a stable, raised in a peasant family, never owned property except the garments on His back, and was even buried in a borrowed tomb."

Third, Jesus performed the greatest act of humility as Philippians 2:6-8 describes, "*although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*" Our glorious Lord, although He was God very God, humbled Himself to death on a cross. He considered His very creation more important than Himself that He might die the most hideous death imaginable that they might be saved from their sin. What an example of humility!

Humility practiced-Since Christ is our great example of humility then we need to follow that great example. In Philippians 2:5, we are told to have this attitude in ourselves, which was also in Christ Jesus. The Apostle John instructs in 1 John 2:6, "*The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.*"

First, humility involves a proper self-awareness. We need to remember from where we came. We were dead in our trespasses and sins. We were children of wrath. We need to recognize our own sin and daily confess that sin. We have a tendency to view ourselves through rose-colored glasses. We usually exaggerate our good qualities and minimize our not so good qualities or the good qualities of others. Note how Paul looked at Himself with a proper self-awareness in 1 Timothy 1:15. He saw himself as the foremost of sinners.

Second, humility involves a proper God-awareness. He is perfect! He is Holy! We need to come before Him in honor and reverence. Note how Isaiah viewed himself in light of having a proper God-awareness in Isaiah 6:1-5.

- *How can we practice humility in our lives so that we walk in a manner worthy of our high calling?*