

Ephesians Chapter 4
Week 1, Intro and begin v.1

What kind of car do you drive or what kind of car do you want to drive?

In the first three chapters of Ephesians, Paul's focus is mainly on doctrine – the principles of what the church is based on. Beginning in chapter 4, he focuses on practical instruction – how the truths of the gospel should affect the way we live.

What is meant by the phrase “talk the talk and walk the walk”?

Meaning: Back up one's talk with action. (from the Phrase Dictionary)

'Walk the walk' is almost always said in combination with 'talk the talk', for example, "if you're going to talk the talk, you've got to walk the walk", or "walk it like you talk it". This is a 20th century American alternative to various old sayings which epitomise the notion that 'talk is cheap', for example 'actions speak louder than words' and 'practice what you preach'. The context for the use of any of these expressions is in response to what is seen as empty boasting. People who are accused of such are said (in the USA) to 'talk a good game' or (in the UK) to be 'all mouth and no trousers'.

We need to know what the Bible says – able to “talk the talk” but this has to go hand in hand with action – doing what the Bible says or “walking the walk”. Having a whole bunch of knowledge with no action is useless; doing all the right things without an understanding of the Truth is useless.

Having a car will not do you any good if there is no gas in the tank. It will just sit in the driveway and look nice but it won't get you anywhere! “Faith without works is like a car without gas.”

Ephesians 4:1 begins with these words: “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord,...”

“I, therefore,” Paul, because of the riches of God's grace and the truths of the gospel, which the church has been given (see Eph Chapters 1-3), is now exhorting them to live these truths out, but not before he reminds them of his status.

Paul calls himself “...the prisoner of the Lord,”.

What comes to mind when you think of the word prisoner?

A prisoner is someone who is trapped or controlled by a person or circumstance. Do you sometimes let the circumstances that surround your life control you? Have you ever made a decision based upon what others think rather than what God says? What can hold you prisoner?

Paul is a prisoner because of the gospel. He does not describe himself here as a prisoner of the Romans, but rather a prisoner “of the Lord”, a prisoner “in the Lord” (ASV), a prisoner “for the Lord” (NIV) and a prisoner “in the Master’s cause (TCNT). He is God’s ambassador and is willing to suffer and even die in order to preach the truth of God’s grace. He has gladly lost his earthly freedoms for the sake of Christ. He is a prisoner physically, but, more importantly, a servant of the cause of Christ, entrusted with the message of the gospel.

At the time of writing Ephesians, Paul is physically a prisoner of the Romans. However, Who does he say is truly holding him captive?

Eph 3:1 For this reason I, Paul, *the prisoner of Christ Jesus* for the sake of you Gentiles—

Eph 6:19-20 and [pray] on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which *I am an ambassador in chains*; that in [proclaiming] it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Col 4:2-3 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with [an attitude of] thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well, that God may open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth *the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned*;

2Ti 1:8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me *His prisoner*; but join with [me] in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God,

Phm 1:1 Paul, *a prisoner of Christ Jesus*, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our beloved [brother] and fellow worker,

Usually, the idea of being a prisoner of something or someone is negative. However, Paul proclaims himself a prisoner of Christ and embraces his imprisonment as a positive situation with opportunities.

Read what Paul says in Phil 3:7-11: But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from [the] Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which [comes] from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Paul *trusts* Who he is imprisoned for. He understands the value of his faith and what it means to believe in God's sovereignty. God works all things together for good. It is easier to trust when things are going well or as we expect, but trusting God when things are difficult is only possible when we believe that He is in complete control and He knows what He is doing. That is called God's sovereignty – He is over all. God loves us. God is perfect in all His ways. We need to trust even when we do not understand.

What does the bible say about our understanding of God?

Ro 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

We are unable to fully comprehend God's wisdom, knowledge and judgments.

"Paul acknowledged what we must acknowledge if we are to trust God. God's plan and His ways of working out His plan are frequently beyond our ability to fathom and understand... [we need to] become so convinced of these truths that we appropriate them in our daily circumstances, that we learn to trust God in the midst of our pain, whatever form it may take. It does not matter whether our pain is trivial or traumatic, temporary or interminable." Jerry Bridges in "Trusting God Even When it Hurts"

How are you doing in the area of trusting God? Can you, along with Paul, no matter what your circumstances, proclaim yourself to be a "prisoner" for the Lord, completely controlled by His Spirit?

Hopefully, each of us would agree that we possess faith in God. *But does our faith in God possess us?*

Paul 100% trusts God. Therefore, He gladly calls himself a prisoner for Him. It is a wonderful thing to be under the control of Someone who knows everything, directs everything and desires to lavishly pour out His blessings on those who follow Him.

2Ti 1:12 For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.

Ps 34:8 O taste and see that the LORD is good; how blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!

Jer 17:7 "Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD And whose trust is the LORD.

Isa 30:18 Therefore the LORD longs to be gracious to you, And therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; How blessed are all those who long for Him.

Application Questions
week 1, Eph 4:1

Small group prayer: take 5 minutes to quietly think about the study this morning and what God is saying to you personally – you may use these questions to help get you thinking or you may have jotted down something during the study – you will have an opportunity in your small group to pray about your personal application following ACTS. If it helps you stay focused, make your own brief notes to follow below:

Adoration –

Confession –

Thanksgiving –

Supplication –

How are you personally doing with “talking the talk” and “walking the walk”? Do you need to pay more attention to your time spent *studying* scripture and/or *applying* scripture? How will you make strides in this area? Think of a plan that will work for your life and schedule and ask God for diligence to help you follow through with the plan.

Think of what you have in Christ – the riches of God’s grace. What does this mean to you? You may want to spend some time going through the first three chapters of Ephesians this week. Mark every occurrence of *in Him, in Christ*, etc. then make a list of the blessings you have because you are His child.

We are able to find peace and constancy in God’s control of our life. When you struggle with allowing circumstances or people to dictate your attitude and choices do you have a list of scriptures you can go to for encouragement in this area? This week look up some verses that will remind you of God’s sovereignty in your life and write them in your journal for quick reference.

How are you doing at fully trusting God in every area of your life? Are you able to trust in Him even when you are unable to understand or see His purpose clearly? Think of a difficult circumstance in your life in the past and list all the blessings that have come from that time. Are you drawn to your knees in praising Him for His goodness?

At home: work through these questions in more depth this week; pray for the concerns of those in your small prayer group; pray for your growth in the areas that God has brought to your attention. Read through Ephesians Chapter 4 each day. Memorize the first two verses.