

Our Walk in Christ

September 30, 2012

I. Introduction

A. Outline:

Sit: Our wealth in Christ Ch. 1-3
Walk: Our walk in Christ Ch. 4-6
Stand: Our Spiritual Warfare 6:10-18

B. Comparison:

Our Wealth	Our Walk
Called by grace to belong to His body (chap 1)	Walk worthy of your calling - the unity of the body (4:1-16)
Raised from the dead (2:1-10)	Put off the grave clothes (4:17-5:17); Walk in purity
Reconciled (2:11-22)	Walk in harmony (5:18-6:9)
Christ's victory over Satan (chap 3)	Walk in victory (6:10-24)

C. A believer's life should match the calling of Christ.

The second half of Ephesians, like that of a number of Paul's epistles, emphasizes the behavior that should result from the doctrines or beliefs taught in the first half. Note that the Christian life is not compared here to running or standing still, but to a walk. walk worthy: (from Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary)

II. Text: Eph 4:1-6

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

A. Walk

Walking is a common biblical expression for how people live out their lives. Today one might speak of "lifestyle." The biblical image implies that human life is heading somewhere, either to life or to death (Believers Church Bible Commentary)

Walking speaks of our lifestyle and conduct.

We are to walk in a manner worthy of our calling.

Ours is a calling and that translation is perhaps the most accurate. I still like the KJV "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." For me "vocation" has a more permanent ring to it. Our "calling" is not for a season; it is not something we hear today which may fade or grow faint tomorrow. We are engaged for life. This is our vocation. Two words, "laity" (laos) and "apostolate," which we use in the Christian church, add meaning to our calling. All Christians are the laity, "the whole people of God," and are a part of the apostolate, those to whom the ministry of Christ is committed. Our lives are to be a vocation for Christ, and we should be constantly asking, "What apostolic action today will reflect my vocation?" (from The Preacher's Commentary Series)

Paul exhorted them to walk (live a life) worthy of their calling. The NIV gives the impression that this walk should be on the basis that Paul was a prisoner for the Lord. However, the Greek does not connote this. Rather it is, "Therefore (rather than then) I, the prisoner of the Lord (as already stated in 3:1), beseech you to walk worthy of your calling." Thus on the basis of what Paul wrote in chapters 1-3 he implored them to walk worthily. The word "worthy" (axiōs) means "equal weight";

one's calling and conduct should be in balance. "The calling" refers not only to believers' salvation (cf. Rom. 1:5-6; 1 Cor. 1:9) but also to their union in one body. Therefore a Christian's conduct concerns both his personal life and his responsibility to other believers in the church. (The Bible Knowledge Commentary)

B. We are to walk with (in):

1. Humility

a) from The Preacher's Commentary Series

The word translated here as lowliness, was actually coined by the Christian faith, and means humility. In the Greek world there was no word that could communicate what Christians knew was a sure "sign" of their vocation. The Greek adjective from which this uniquely Christian word was compounded always connoted cringing servility, cowering slavishness.

b) from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

In Greek culture, humility was thought of as a vice, to be practiced only by slaves. But Paul stated that saints should be completely humble in their daily walks. This is the opposite of pride. On the other hand Christians should not promote false humility, but should recognize who they are in God's program (cf. John 3:30; Rom. 12:3). This virtue is listed first because of Paul's emphasis on unity (pride promotes disunity; humility promotes unity) and to counteract their past pride, so as to facilitate obedience to and dependence on God. Christ was the supreme example of humility (Phil. 2:6-8)

2. Gentleness

a) from The Preacher's Commentary Series

This word has nothing to do with weakness. It is strength that knows who it is. It is submission in relation to others for the sake of Christ.

The cross and the basin and towel are the signs of meekness—the cross, submission; the basin and towel, service. Bernard of Clairvaux said, "Learn the lesson that, if you are to do the work of a prophet, what you need is not a scepter but a hoe." Prophets are meek. They know who they are—submissive servants for Christ's sake.

The argument that arose among the disciples in the Upper Room at the Last Supper was over which of them was the greatest (Luke 9:46). Isn't it true that most of the time when there is trouble over who is the greatest, there is trouble over who is the least? Most of us know we will not be the greatest, but we do not want to be least.

Meekness is a willingness to be least if obedience to God requires it

b) from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

A believer is to be gentle or "meek;" this is the opposite of self-assertion, rudeness, and harshness. It suggests having one's emotions under control. But it does not suggest weakness. It is the mean between one who is angry all the time and one who is never angry. One who is controlled by God is angry at the right time but never angry at the wrong time. Moses was known as the meekest of all men (Num. 12:3, KJV). Yet he got angry when Israel sinned against God (Ex. 32). Christ was meek and humble in heart (Matt. 11:29). Yet He bec

3. Patience

a) from The Preacher's Commentary Series

This word is often translated "patience" as in this case in the RSV and NEB. It describes a spirit, of never giving in or never giving up; a spirit of persistence which sees defeat as a temporary, not final, setback, thus not to be deterred by discouragement and disappointment.

Another more characteristic meaning literally is "a long temper" and thus has to do with relationships. Chrysostom saw it as the spirit of one who has the power to take revenge, but never does.

b) from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

Third, believers should exhibit patience (makrothymias). Patience is the spirit which never gives up for it endures to the end even in times of adversity (James 5:10). It is the self-restraint which does not hastily retaliate a wrong (cf. Gal. 5:22; Col. 1:11; 3:12; 2 Tim. 4:2).

4. Showing forbearance to one another in love

from Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary

Bearing is close to our expression "putting up with"; however, Paul's use of the term has positive connotations. It describes being patient with the shortcomings of others. Often we ask God to be patient with our own failings, and yet do not exercise the same type of patience ourselves.

5. Being diligent to preserve the unity of the spirit

from The Bible Exposition Commentary

Literally it reads "being eager to maintain, or guard, the unity of the Spirit."

from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

making every effort (the Gr. has a participle, "making every diligent effort")

C. We preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

from The Preacher's Commentary Series

The "signs" of our Christian vocation that Paul insisted on result in peace. In fact, he made his case for them here because he is talking about Christian community, the church. Without humility, meekness, longsuffering, and love there can be no real community.

Note what may not be obvious. Each of the previous four virtues depends upon getting self out of the center, and that is what community is dependent upon. That is also what makes for peace. Within community, every member must be willing to give up his own self-interest for the common good. As long as my feelings, my prestige, my interests are the things that matter, there can be no peace. But humble, meek, patient, loving people have mastered the "my," and are committed to "our."

Peace within the community of faith is no mere formal one, imposed and maintained by authority. It is a peace that flows from its members being at peace with each other because they are bound together by love.

from the Believers Church Bible Commentary

Believers are to be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. To be eager or to hurry (spoudazō) captures the urgency with which unity is to be maintained. In the NT, the term for unity (henotēs) is unique to Ephesians (cf. also 4:13). It is a unity of the Spirit, meaning a unity the Spirit makes possible (cf. 2:18). Unity is a divine gift to humanity and has been purchased at enormous cost (2:14–16). Even so, this gift is fragile, and its maintenance and ongoing realization require all the energy and resourcefulness, all the eagerness and zeal, with which God has endowed believers through the Spirit.

The irony returns to full view in the final image of this sentence: the bond (sundesmos) of peace. Sundesmos can mean "joint," "tie," "band," or "chain"—anything that binds things. Peace is the fetter of unity. Humility, gentleness, patience, and forbearance are the links in this chain of peace (4:2–3).

III. There is one:

Jesus paid a great price for unity among believers (Eph 2:14-16). The Holy Spirit is emphasizing unity by using the word "one." There is one:

1. Body
2. Spirit
3. Hope of your calling
4. Lord
5. Faith
6. Baptism
7. God and Father

IV. The Grace of Unity Eph. 4:1–3 (from The Bible Exposition Commentary; by W. W. Wiersbe)

Unity is not uniformity. Unity comes from within and is a spiritual grace, while uniformity is the result of pressure from without. Paul used the human body as a picture of Christian unity (1 Cor. 12), and he adapts the same illustration here in this section (Eph. 4:13–16). Each part of the body is different from the other parts, yet all make up one body and work together.

If we are going to preserve the "unity of the Spirit," we must possess the necessary Christian graces, and there are seven of them listed here.

The first is lowliness, or humility. Someone has said, "Humility is that grace that, when you know you have it, you have lost it." Humility means putting Christ first, others second, and self last. It means knowing ourselves, accepting ourselves, and being ourselves to the glory of God. God does not condemn you when you accept yourself and your gifts (Rom. 12:3). He just does not want us to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to—or less highly than we ought to.

Meekness is not weakness. It is power under control. Moses was a meek man (Num. 12:3), yet see the tremendous power he exercised. Jesus Christ was "meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11:29), yet He drove the money changers from the temple. In the Greek language, this word was used for a soothing medicine, a colt that had been broken, and a soft wind. In each case you have power, but that power is under control.

Allied with meekness is long-suffering, which literally means "long-tempered," the ability to endure discomfort without fighting back.

This leads to the mentioning of forbearance, a grace that cannot be experienced apart from love. "Love suffereth long and is kind" (1 Cor. 13:4). Actually, Paul is describing some of the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22–23); for the "unity of the Spirit" (Eph. 4:3) is the result of the believer "walking in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16).

The next grace that contributes to the unity of the Spirit is endeavor. Literally it reads "being eager to maintain, or guard, the unity of the Spirit." "It's great that you love each other," I once heard a seasoned saint say to a newly wedded couple, "but if you're going to be happy in marriage, you gotta work at it!" The verb used here is a present participle, which means we must constantly be endeavoring to maintain this unity. In fact, when we think the situation is the best, Satan will move in to wreck it. The spiritual unity of a home, a Sunday School class, or a church is the responsibility of each person involved, and the job never ends.

The final grace is peace—"the bond of peace." Read James 3:13–4:10 for the most vivid treatment of war and peace in the New Testament. Note that the reason for war on the outside is war on the inside. If a believer cannot get along with God, he cannot get along with other believers. When "the peace of God" rules in our hearts, then we build unity (Col. 3:15).