

## 10. How is your walk?

December 2, 2012

One of the best recommended exercises by many doctors is walking . You see these walkers everywhere. Unlike jogging which was so popular in 80's and 90's, walking does not cause so many injuries. Now many of those joggers are experiencing knee problems from jogging as they get older.

But how is your spiritual walk with Christ? Once we became a born-again Christian, we started to learn how to crawl as a babe in Christ. Regardless of our physical age, we had to learn the truth from the Bible in small bite size so that we could comprehend and apply it into our lives.

As we grow older in the Lord Jesus, we start to walk in the Lord. That means that we learn to choose to walk in the path of righteousness and holiness where our Lord wants us to go rather than the paths of destruction, brokenness, and temptations we used to choose. This process is a life-long process. It doesn't end until we get to heaven.

As we go into chapter 4 of the Book of Ephesians, you will notice a big change in Paul's writing. Most of Paul's letters contain a turning point where they shift from theological to practical, from principle to application and Paul signaled this change of direction with the word 'therefore' as you would find them in Romans 12:1, Galatians 5:1, and Colossians 3:1. We will find that word 'therefore' in Ephesians 4:1.

In these last three chapters, the apostle admonishes us to walk in unity (Ephesians 4:1-16), walk in purity (Ephesians 4:17-5:17), walk in harmony (Ephesians 5:18-6:9), and walk in victory (Ephesians 6:10-24).

### A. WALK WORTHY OF THE CALLING

*Ephesians 4:1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,*

The late pastor and Bible teacher J. Vernon McGee said in his Bible teachings, "When you see the word 'therefore' in the Bible, you need to see what is 'there for.'" I still love to listen to that Texan's Bible teaching classes on the radio.

The word 'beseech' was mentioned twice in the NT by Paul – one in Romans 12:1 and here. In Greek, it is 'parakleo'. It means "admonish, exhort, implore, urge."

So the apostle is urging us to walk worthy of the calling with which we were called. What calling? Those who are born-again, we are called to be sanctified. We've been called to be children of God by faith. We've been called to be heirs of salvation.

What is the meaning of sanctification? When we put our trust in Christ, we were made righteous positionally in Christ. God declared us righteous by justifying us because of the life and death of His Son Jesus. But justification also marks the beginning of sanctification – the process of our becoming righteous practically, being set apart to God by the Spirit to grow out of sin and more fully into Christ.

In other words, as we grow mature in the Lord, we learn to say, "No" to the temptations that we used to give in to with very little resistance previously; now we learn to make godly and right choices instead of ungodly and bad choices.

We will never be perfectly sanctified until heaven, but we will move toward perfection. We will change. We will, by the power of the Holy Spirit, conform more and more to the will of God and live lives that are pleasing to Him as we become more and more obedient to the Holy Spirit.

*1 Thessalonians 4:3-7 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6 that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. 7 For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.*

Sin will always be present with us in this earthly life, but its influence over us will be lessened over time in the process of sanctification.

## **B. FIVE ASPECTS WE MUST ATTAIN**

To give us a better understanding of “walk worthy of the calling”, Paul lists five aspects we must attain:

*Ephesians 4:2-3 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

### **1) Lowliness – a.k.a. Humility**

In typical ancient Greek mindset, the word for “humility” was a derogatory term suggesting low-mindedness and miserable servanthood. The Greeks had no place in their language or beliefs for humility. It was looked upon as a bad thing. That is even more true in our selfish 21st Century culture, as evidenced by attitudes that say, “Look-out-for-number-one” and “What’s-in-it-for-me?”

In Matthew 11:29, the very Son of God was gentle and humble in heart. And He didn’t come to be served, rather to serve in order to bring us salvation.

In light of Christ’s example, how would we define humility? It is an attitude of the heart that recognizes God’s love for and value of others and is willing to put their needs first. It’s the opposite of pride, which turns the spotlight on ourselves and seeks to satisfy the self. In contrast, humility lights up others and seeks to serve with the same dignity and kindness in which Christ Himself chose to live.

### **2) Gentleness – a.k.a. Meekness**

Where humility is an attitude, “gentleness is the action derived from it.

We should not be confused ‘gentleness’ or ‘meekness’ as ‘weakness.’ Rather it is power under control. Moses was a meek man according to Numbers chapter 12, yet see the tremendous power of God that was displayed through him from Egypt to the wilderness. No one ever was used by the Lord like Moses in the Bible, but he knew his place in God.

Gentleness, like humility, is also vital to maintaining unity because it smoothes our rough edges and creates a safe place for everyone. Jesus even bestowed a special blessing on the gentleness, remember?

*Matthew 5:5 Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.*

### **3) Longsuffering – a.k.a. Patience**

How many of you have been praying for patience for yourself? Are you having fun yet?

Humility may be the hardest of the godly traits to learn, but patience comes in the hardest way. Patience gives people time and room – something we all need so much but get and give so little to others.

For those who think themselves patient, I have these questions to ask you: What were you doing in front of your microwave that was taking the whole thirty seconds to heat a hotdog? Or were you patiently waiting for your printer to print out documents or were you practically yanking the paper out of it because you thought it was not working fast enough for you? Or, here is a kicker, were you the one who swerves from lane to lane on I-19 to gain a few car lengths on those around you? We are all guilty as charged.

Patience is essential, especially in the body of Christ, because it creates an atmosphere of grace that allows us to fail and grow, make mistakes and learn. It clears a space for feelings to cool down and reasonableness to regain its footing. And patience, too, is one of Christ's qualities – He kindly waits for people to repent and receive new life in Him.

*1 Timothy 1:16 However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.*

#### **4) Bearing with one another in love – a.k.a. Loving Tolerance**

Just as humility and gentleness go hand in hand, so do patience and loving tolerance. Patience makes us gracious, especially when we've been treated poorly. Loving tolerance is "the action side of patience," which reaches out in forgiveness and empathy.

In our typical human mindset, we say, "No way, you are not going to walk all over me. I am gonna get you if that is the last thing I do." But do you remember what Jesus did on the cross – how graciously the Son of God Jesus who created the entire universe including us, has acted toward us? Even when we were enemies of God with our own sins, He set us free from the bondage of Satan, gave us eternal life, and made us be the children of the Living God.

You see, walking worthy of the calling with which we were called includes being humble, gentle to mean people, patient in insults, and loving tolerant to those who irritate us.

#### **5) Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace**

The verb 'endeavor' in Greek is "spoudazo" and its tense is present. That means we must constantly be endeavoring to maintain the unity in the Spirit.

If we practice these five aspects in the churches around the world, there won't be bickering among the believers of Christ, and it would give such a beautiful testimony to the unbelievers. When Ghandi was asked, "What is the greatest hindrance to Christianity in India?" he replied, "Christians." Yes, we are guilty of that, too.

### **C. ONENESS**

*Ephesians 4:4-6 There is one body and one Spirit, just as 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 above all, and through all, and in you all.*

To illustrate the unity God has created in Christ, Paul listed seven of its facets, underscored by the repetition of the word 'one' all seven times.

### **1) One Body**

Jewish and Gentile born-again believers make up a single fellowship of believers. There should be no discrimination or favoritism by class, wealth, education, intelligence, ethnic differences, or appearance. We must see each other the way Jesus sees us.

### **2) One Spirit**

The same Holy Spirit indwells each born-again believer, so that we belong to each other in the Lord. He provides a "common principle of life" for us all, and His "presence is the ultimate ground of our unity."

### **3) One hope of your calling**

All the born-again Christians have the same hope that someday we will be in heaven and be transformed into Christ's sinless likeness. We all look forward to the future when Christ will return and take us out of this world and wipe away all our tears and take us to the place where is no more evil, no more night, no more pain, no more death, no more sickness, but joy, peace, and unmarred communion with our God forever and ever.

But if you are not a born-again Christian, regardless of how you sincerely believe, you are sincerely wrong and you will end up in hell by rejecting what the Lord Jesus offers to you. As it is written in the Book of Hebrews, don't harden your heart toward His invitation.

*Hebrews 3:7-8a Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you will hear His voice, 8 Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion*

### **4) One Lord**

Jesus made it very clear that He is the only Way, the Truth, and the Life. And He is one with the Father. Christ is the very reason all of us can come together.

### **5) One Faith**

We can overlook minor theological differences among the born-again believers, but when it comes to the basics of Christianity, we should not have any room to shift. The basics of Christianity can be seen in the Apostles' Creed. I am sure that we can add more basics to this, but this covers very well:

I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord;

Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary;

Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead and buried: He descended into hell;

The third day he rose again from the dead;

He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;

From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead;

I believe in the Holy Ghost;

I believe in the holy catholic church: the communion of saints;

The forgiveness of sins; The resurrection of the body;

And the life everlasting. Amen.

### **6) One baptism**

We publicly proclaim our identification with Christ through the unique and unifying sign of baptism, an outward sign of our inner faith. The methods may vary, but we share the meaning of the sign.

**7) One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.**

As God's own children through belief in His Son, Jesus Christ, we all look to one Father. He is the sovereign Creator, the Lord of all who believe. But He's no distant deity. He is "over all" – sovereignly superintending His creatures and creation. He is "through all" – omnipotently sustaining the universe and us as He works through our lives. And He is "in all" – omnipresently living in us.

I think that this is a great place to say, "Amen," wouldn't you think?

**D. APPLICATIONS**

1) Sanctification is a constant series of godly choices we must make as Christians to walk worthy of our calling for the glory of God.

2) Let's think and practice the unity in Christ through humility, gentleness, patience, loving tolerance, and keeping the bond of peace.