

“Ephesians and You - A New Walk”

The Family of God

Ephesians 4:1-7

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Jeff: I was going to say, “Good morning, my brothers.” But it’s evening when I’m recording this. And so, good evening. I don’t know about you guys, but I am really looking forward to getting back together with you. It is a drag being alone.

And you know, I now know what a support group feels like, because I’ve got to tell you. When I come to you guys after having received emails from Don Maurer, it’s like I get your support. It’s like a support group because that’s what it is. We’re all supporting one another in this end, because you know exactly how it feels. Don has gotten word back to me that he refuses to repent. You remember when I called him to repent last week of his meanness, and he just didn’t do it and refuses to do so. Anyway that’s where we are, and I miss my support group, and so I’m looking forward to getting back with you. But for right now we’re going to carry on. And Don, well, Don,--

Anyway, we’re going to carry on with Ephesians chapter 4. And we’re going to look at just the first part of it today. So let me read it to you.

Ephesians chapter 4. *“I, therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift.”*

Well, that’s all the further I’m going to read today. And before we tackle the word of God today, let’s just bow for a word of prayer.

Father in heaven, thank You for this day, for the time You’ve given to us. And despite the separation we are thankful that Your word reigns supreme because it is Your word. We are so thankful that You’ve left us with a deposit, a guarantee of better things yet to come in the gift of Your Spirit who indwells us. Father, we’re thankful that the Spirit indwells us and brings the spiritual truth of the unity we have with Christ to bear upon our thinking and to bear upon our reality. Father, forgive us where we fail to think of these things and help us to be strengthened by them. Forgive us our sins and help us to look to You in Your word still more and more, for we ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Okay. Well, we have come to chapter 4. And if you remember rightly, I said that the first three chapters are of a particular grammatical kind. They talk about the indicatives, all that God has done on our behalf. And that’s the way the gospel is. This is what God has done for you, and now you do this, not so that you can merit anything? Why? Because God has already done it for you. So you do this out of gratitude and demonstration of your love, that sort of thing.

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So we've come now to chapter 4, and 5 and 6 which will follow. And these are the chapters that are going to begin to tell us what we must do because of what we have received. So that's what we're going to look at today.

Now let me begin with something of an illustration that I think comes out of the text, although it's not textual. I want you to think about children. I know that when my children were growing up that I think this hit me most forcefully with my son. He was my first child, and so I think the discovery of it was quite shocking in some ways.

When I started to look at him, to really look at him as he grew, I thought to myself, *Man, that kid has a big melon!* And so I did a little Internet search. And I thought to myself, *“Something's wrong with this kid, you know? His head is getting big and his body is staying small. What's happening here?”*

So after I did this Internet search I discovered some facts. I discovered that an infant has 40% the size of an adult head. That's incredible! But here's the next thing I realized. I realized from my search that by the age of seven that children's heads are 90% of what an adult's head is. That is huge!

Now think about that. They're just like bauble heads. These kids have these enormous heads on these little bodies. And as soon as I read it I thought to myself that this is a great theological lesson. It's a great theological lesson because what are we learning in this chapter? We have already learned what God has done for us in Christ, who is what? He is the Head of the body.

Now when you think about it like that, you think about it like a kid. What is a kid doing? Well, in many ways a kid is growing up into his head size. His body is trying to catch up with his head.

And that's exactly what the Christian life is all about in the church. The church as the body is always trying to grow up into the Head, Christ. And so this is a beautiful theological lesson that we learn right at the outset. And what we're doing when we enter into chapter 4 is discovering what it means to grow up into the Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. What does it mean to become what we already are, His body? And what does that mean, for it to grow?

Well, it obviously means that we mature. And part of maturing very simply is learning how to walk. And it's not surprising then that Paul uses that peripatetic, that walking terminology, to describe the pattern of the Christian life. He talks about it as if this is what we do as Christians: we walk. And what he means is that this is the kind of life that we live when he talks about walking.

So let's think about walking for a minute. Let's think about this from the vantage point of another illustration. Let me give you a word. Well, I won't give you a word because I don't have any chalk. *(He laughs.)* Don, did you take my chalk again? Well, I digress.

Anyway, orthodontics; take that as an example. What is orthodontics? What is an orthodontist? Well, orthodontics is “straight tooth.” That's what it means: “straight tooth.”

Or think about this. What does orthopedics mean. Orthopedics means “straight limbs,” you know, “straight bones.” And so when we have ortho- at the beginning of something it means “straight something.” There is something that needs straightened or something that is straight.

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Now I want you to think about what we’ve been saying: the body growing up into its Head, becoming what we already are. I want you to think now about walking. When we walk we don’t walk very well, because we’ve been in the world. We’ve lived according to the prince of the power of the air. And we’ve been following the way of the flesh. So we don’t walk well, at least by Christian standards. So we need to mature in our walk.

Now think about it like this. How does one who has a physical deficiency walk well? Well, I’ll tell you what the orthopedics do. The orthopedics put on what is called AFO’s. And those AFO’s basically provide a cast-like shape that the leg fits into so that the leg can now function properly and have proper movements, and so walk with a regular normal gait.

I remember when my son was growing up. You guys know that my son is in a wheelchair. And when he was really young they would make him AFO’s. They’re called *ankle/foot orthotics*. And basically what those AFO’s would do is that they would be strapped onto his legs. And then those orthotics would guide his steps. He would have to obviously manually move his legs, and so on. But those would keep his feet and his legs in the proper position. So they functioned very much like a guide for him.

Now I want you to think about that for just a minute. When you think about this text it says that we’ve been “called to a calling.” In other words, we’ve been called to a certain way of life. Our imperfect gait has been called up against a standard so that we can use that standard to walk.

You can think about this in all sorts of ways. For instance, if you think about a ruler as you underline, the ruler is the standard by which your pencil runs so that it can make a straight line.

Think about an oath. Think about doctors who take the Hippocratic oath. They basically say, “I’m taking this oath. And may my behavior in the field of medicine align with that oath.” Now I realize that they don’t take the same Hippocratic oath as they once did, and so on. But the example still holds.

Or a minister of the gospel who says, “I believe that the Bible is the infallible and inerrant word of God. And I believe, for instance, that the Westminster Standards are a good summary of that. And I will not teach contrary to what I find in there.” Or, for instance, in the Anglican Church it’s the 39 Articles, and so on. But the point is that this secondary standard of the Westminster Standards or the 39 Articles, or what have you, this becomes the ruler or the orthotics whereby our gait is made straight. And so our walking is helped by these things.

And so what’s the standard when we think about what the calling is? Well, when we think about the text and what the calling is, the calling is the call of God. God has called us into a relationship with Himself. And guess who becomes the standard of that relationship? God is the standard. And so our lives are called into union with Him by virtue of our union with Christ which is Spirit-wrought. And our lives as they’re hidden in Him mature. And the maturity conforms to God Himself. He’s like the AFO that makes straight our walking, our gait. And so that’s the idea.

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Now the question that we have to ask is this. How is it that we can walk in a way that’s worthy of our calling? What is it about this walking that increasingly gets straighter each time we take a step?

Well, the interesting thing is, of course, that he mentions a few things in this text. First of all he talks about *humility*. He talks about *gentleness*. And he talks about *patience* and *love*.

Now these things are commonplace when it comes to talking about the Christian life, and yet he singles these things out. Now let’s think about each one of them just for a minute.

I want you to think about *humility*. Humility is one of those things that I think is difficult for people to understand, because typically people who understand humility understand it in one of two ways. They either understand it in terms of weakness, or they take it too far and they think that it’s some sort of self-depreciation. And so both of those are wrong, and both of them are sinful.

Humility is not weakness. If anything, humility is strength restrained. But it’s also not self-depreciation either. It’s not beating ourselves up, especially when we don’t deserve to be beaten up.

You say, “What’s humility then?” Well, humility is basically this. It’s having a proper self-understanding. Let’s go back to ground zero. What do I understand about myself? What kind of person am I? And that sort of thing is what it means to be humble.

For instance, let’s say you’re an architect, or let’s say you’re a computer programmer, or let’s say that you’re any number of things. If someone comes to you and he just asks you a simple question, “What do you do for a living?”

They say, “Are you good at what you do?” Now most people who see that self-depreciation as humility are going to say, “No, I’m not very good; I’m terrible. I guess it depends,” that sort of thing.

That’s not a good answer, and it’s not humility. Humility is not violated when you say, “I do my job well, and I’m appreciated for what I do. And my projects have been noted by my employer. And so I guess you would say that I’m a pretty good computer programmer.” You could say something like that, and that’s not pride. That’s a proper self-estimate of oneself. And that coincides with humility very well.

And so humility is basically understanding who you are, and how you function properly with that self-understanding within a group of other people. And you know, I want you to know something. Others will be able to tell if you’re not a humble person immediately, because people can sort of sniff that thing out.

There is also *gentleness*. Now gentleness is an interesting word. It actually meant a variety of things early in the day. For instance, it could mean *of the same clan*. It could mean *nobility*. It could mean those kinds of things. And basically what the idea is is this. You’re the kind of person that is of a certain caste or rank.

Now I think that fits well. Although it may not be exactly what stands behind Paul’s word, it does fit well with what he’s communicating. In other words, you’re a Christian, part of the body of Christ. And that means that there is a certain type of walk that is becoming of any Christian. That’s what he has in mind. So there’s this proper self-

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estimate not that we have of ourselves, but that functions with others. We're of the same clan. We realize that we're functioning in this group with other people who ought to conduct themselves in the same way.

And then there's *patience*. Patience is the idea of *bearing up under*. Now I want you to understand something. When you think about patience you often think about trying circumstances or situations. But think about people. You're in this group of people. You're humble; you have this proper self-estimate. You're gentle, and someone else isn't. They're learning; they're growing in humility. They're growing in an understanding of what the Christian life is and in the doing of it.

You have patience with them. Why? Because you love them. You see, Christian love is not person-oriented. It is this. It is when you love because you've been loved in this way. You love undeserving people. And this person who may be undeserving needs your love. And you're required to give it to them, especially if they're within the church, which is what we're talking about.

And all of this—humility, gentleness, patience, love,—all of this is for unity's sake. And that's what Paul says. Theology, this understanding of how we walk and what our walk should be like, this is all part of what it means to be one body, one Spirit, of one hope, having one Lord, one faith and one baptism, one God and Father of all.

Now that is what it means when it talks about walking according to the call with which we've been called, having this straight walk, and having this group of virtues that characterize our lives as Christians.

Well, the next time we'll get on to the next part of the chapter. I'll spend a little bit more time with this idea of unity because it's really important. But that at least gets our feet wet as we walk into chapter 4 together. Well men, it's been great to be with you, at least in this way. I really look forward to getting back together with you again soon. So until we do, may the Lord bless you.