

Ephesians 4:1-3. I therefore, a 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.

Paul is currently a prisoner of the Roman empire as he writes this book. Ephesus was the fourth largest city in the Roman empire and was positioned as a trade center then the harbor become unnavigable and their viability was lost. The city was the home of the temple of the goddess Artemis as the Greeks called her or Diana as known by the Romans. Artemis was the patroness of sex and therefore temple prostitutes were a central part of worship. Tourism, based on the temple and the worship of Artemis became the primary economy of the city. God sent Paul to be a light and to call the church to Godly living in a dramatic way in a very dark place.

From his prison cell, the Apostle Paul wrote a letter to the church of Ephesus that can be broken into two parts, the first three chapters are all doctrine showing how we are made saints. The last 3 chapters are an exhortation to now go LIVE like saints. The book is one of the most concise and practical Christian life books in scripture.

In chapter 4 verse 1 Paul implores the believers in Ephesus to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which they have been called. The word “implore” means to beg someone earnestly or desperately to do something. In Chapter 1 when Paul launches into the doctrinal portion of the letter he introduces himself as “an apostle of Christ Jesus”, asserting his God given authority for what he is about to share. When we get to chapter 4 and this passage, he shifts to identifying himself as a prisoner of the Lord and he’s imploring, begging, beseeching, pleading with the church to live according to the calling they’ve received while approaching them as a lowly prisoner and fellow heir of God’s grace.

WALKING IN A MANNER WORTHY

When a soldier enlists in the military, he is called to walk in a manner worthy of his country, in duty to the commanding

officers. There is an expectation that they do everything a certain way, starting in boot camp when they’re taught to march, to be disciplined, to obey, even to the details of making their bed. The reason for such attention to detail is to produce a useful soldier, to set the soldier apart for service.

In Chapter 4 Paul is giving the Christian their marching orders. He’s saying that the Christian life should have as much weight as the profession of faith that they make. Or in other words, practice what you preach.

What does that look like? In verse 2 he calls us to four major qualities.

HUMILITY/LOWLINESS

Humility is the absence of pride and literally means “to be low”. Since pride was what caused Lucifer to fall, ultimately led Adam and Eve to sin in the garden, and is listed in proverbs 6:16 (Haughty eyes) as the first sin Solomon lists as sin God hates, it is easy to see why Paul would list this first. Also, we see that God gives grace to the humble but opposes the proud all throughout the bible. Pride is at the root of nearly all our sin as we place ourselves before others. Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but rather thinking of yourself less. We can’t come to Christ in the first place without understanding our desperate need for salvation in our sinful state. Humility is necessary for us to walk in a manner worthy of our calling.

GENTLENESS/MEEKNESS

Gentleness and meekness are parallel words used in different translations. The idea is strength under control. Meekness, although it sounds like weakness is far from it. A parent with a baby is a good example, although the baby may be screaming mad because it is uncomfortable, sleepy, or hungry, the parent can calmly fix the problem and help the baby because of the difference in strength. Paul calls us to the same type of behavior as we deal with one another and carry out our calling.

A Call to Action

PATIENCE/LONGSUFFERING

Patience and longsuffering describe being slow to anger, taking a lot to provoke a response. In the heat of a moment, a cool, calm response would prevail over a raw reaction. Patience is one of God's qualities that should amaze us. The sin and rebellion He puts up with in his mercy towards us when He would be perfectly justified to bring judgement at any moment is amazing, yet God remains patient. How much more then should we be patient.

TOLERANCE/FORBEARING

Tolerance is a word that has been redefined in recent days. The King James version of the bible uses the word forbearing. What the word means is to be slow to anger even while being provoked. Forbearing is a synonym for tolerance and is the traditional definition of the word tolerance. The updated definition is to be accepting of another's beliefs or behaviors that is different than you own and a synonym. In this passage, Paul is calling us to be under control and slow to respond even when being provoked.

Paul is calling them to be humble, gentle, patient and tolerant with one another in love. All the qualities are to be carried out toward one another. Just like in Colossians 3 when Paul says to seek the things above, then goes on to spend the rest of the chapter saying to put on and put off a similar set of qualities, but its unmistakable that these things must be carried out in relationships within the body of Christ. He gives us very practical actions to take toward others as we live out our faith.

Paul doesn't just leave us with this list of four qualities, he also reminds us that these things ought to be motivated by LOVE for the sake of UNITY and to create a bond of PEACE. The Lord is not merely interested in our works, but also the heart and motivation being pure.

Ephesians 4:3- being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Much like the strong language Paul uses when he "implores" the Ephesians to walk in a manner worthy, he uses very strong

language when he says to be diligent to preserve the unity of the spirit. The Greek word used here is *spoudazo* which means "to take care, make haste, do one's best." The King James version translates this word "endeavor." It speaks of making a determined effort to maintain unity.

For the rest of Chapter 4, Paul builds a case for the unity shared in Christ. He teaches on equipping of the saints for roles in the church for ministry, a call to maturity and sound doctrine, then gets more specific about what walking in a manner worthy of our calling looks like. It's similar to what he did in Colossians 3.

GREAT NEWS!

Because of the sinful flesh we reside in, these are difficult tasks to achieve. As we strive to walk in a way that pleases the Lord and hopefully we desire to obey the Word of God, we can get discouraged by the difficulty we have being humble, gentle, patient and tolerant of one another. The good news is God doesn't simply give us this charge then leave us to ourselves to go out and achieve it all. At the end of Ephesians chapter 3, Paul prays for the church of Ephesus. These are the verses immediately preceding the passage we're looking at today.

Ephesians 3:16-20- that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us.

In this prayer, we learn that God himself has given us the power through the Holy Spirit to be able to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which we have been called! That is great news, how wonderful that he doesn't leave us in our helpless state and that through his power we are able to grow to be more like Him.