



## The Grand Plan of The Glorious God

Series: **Walking Worthy, Walking Together**

**Ephesians 4:1-6**

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As we begin this text this morning, we see a distinct shift in the Paul's focus in this letter to the Ephesians. Paul has spoken of the eternal counsel of God, His eternal love, election and predestination of His church, the adoption of saints as the children of God, the redemption of the church through the sacrificial death of Christ, the work of Holy Spirit, the process of salvation applied to sinners, the joining together of people from every nation and from every walk of life into the holy temple of the Lord, the family of God, the body of Christ. Now what Paul is going to do is to move from mind-blowing theology to its down-to-earth, tangible implications and expressions in everyday living. Paul is shifting from truth to application, from exposition to exhortation. So Paul presents to us

**A Reasonable Expectation – Walk Worthy of Your Calling (v.1)** Now there are two words that we need to understand here in this first verse that are going to set the tone for everything else that follows – “worthy” and “calling.” Walk worthy of your calling. When we hear the word worthy we usually think of the idea of deserving. When we say that God is worthy of worship, we mean that He is deserving of worship. But the word that is used here is a word that means “consistent with.” It is the idea of matching or coordinated. Paul is pointing back to everything that God has given us and everything that God says that we are and he is saying; “Now walk according to who you are in Christ. Walk as the chosen of God, as His adopted child, as a redeemed Child of God. You are now in Christ, so walk in a manner that is consistent with your calling.”

Let me give you a mental picture of this. You are familiar with balancing scales, right? You would put a weight on one side – a pound for instance, and then you would pile stuff up on the other side until it the two sides were even. This word that is translated as worthy was used in Greek to speak of scales that were properly balanced. So what Paul is getting at is this: on one side is the glorious gospel of God's grace to us in Christ and on the other side, our godly conduct should match this high calling. It is not a case of us piling up merit with God to pay Him back for His salvation, it is walking in a manner that is fitting, that is consistent with our calling in Christ.

Now you see why strong and unwavering theology is so vital to walking with Christ. It must precede practice. The truth is that unless believers understand and hold fast to who they are and to their calling from God, they end up with a daily walk that is driven, not by a sense of grace from God and power in the Holy Spirit, not by a consistent moving forward in their walk with Christ, but by sporadic and irregular fits and starts and fad-chasing and guilt motivation instead of a long obedience in the same direction rooted in the grace of God. Their walk is not in a manner consistent with their calling, because they don't know the substance of their calling.

But we know. Because of what God has revealed to us through Paul, we know that we have been given a calling, a noble calling, a vital calling – a calling from death into life, from darkness into light, from sin into holiness, from unbelief to saving faith in Jesus Christ. As Peter summarizes so well, **(1Pe 2:9)** We have been specifically chosen by God for this great purpose, to know Jesus Christ and to make Him known. If you are a Christian, know today that God has chosen you for this wonderful honor to proclaim through your life, through your words, through the transformation that He has worked and is working in you right now –you are chosen to declare the glory of the Living God. He has called you to this. **(1Co 1:26-31)**

All else pales by comparison. Every aspect of your life is an opportunity to reflect and to make known the greatness of Jesus Christ, to walk in a manner consistent with who you are in Christ, and who Christ is in you. It is our great privilege and unavoidable calling. Paul expects Christ to be formed in our life – our thoughts, desires, purposes, moral character – the very reason we saw him praying that we would be strengthened according to the riches of his glory through his Spirit in our inner being, so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith.

Throughout the rest of this book, Paul is going to tell us, he is going to explain to us how we walk as a new man and as a new woman in Christ, but as he does it, he is first going to set his instruction to us in the context of the church, in the context of the local church. That is going to be our focus this morning – the local church. I suppose that there is application that can be made to the church universal – the invisible church, every believer in the world, but this letter must find its first application to the local church, because it was written to a local church first. And the reason why is this: because the church is the visible body of Christ on this earth. This church is to be the visible manifestation of Christ in this world. Together we are to be the visible glory of the invisible God. That is why it is so important that we walk in a manner worthy of our calling, because the greatest reason for unbelief in the world -- not excuse, I know that before God, every man is without excuse – the greatest reason is not the theory of evolution, it's not postmodernism and it's not secularism. The greatest reason for easy unbelief in the world is the poor testimony of professing Christians. But the flipside is also true, that the greatest impetus for faith in the world is the company of the redeemed who understand and

embrace their calling. The greatest evangelistic tool, if you will, in the world is the local church that knows who she is in Christ and lives it out because she displays the power and the glory of God and adorns her living with the gospel. Paul tells us how to do it, what must be present in a church like that. He tells us, together as the church of God,

**How To Walk Worthy of Our Calling (v. 2)** If we are going to, together walk worthy of our calling in Christ, what are we going to need?

The first thing Paul talks about is **humility** and it makes sense. If we are saved by grace through faith as a gift of God and not by our works so that no human being can boast, it is evident that we cannot be proud. We have nothing to brag about. When we rightly understand that we have nothing to commend ourselves to God – whatever we may point to - intellect, wealth, fame, personality, good works, business success, self-reliance – they count for nothing with God. We stand before God with everything to condemn us and nothing to commend us save the shed blood of Jesus Christ on our behalf. It is to realize that everything we are and everything we have is from God. It is to realize that we can do nothing without Him, that His grace is our source of life. It is to realize that we are all on the equal footing before the cross. No one is greater than the other because we have all been given the same calling. Humility is expressed, in the words of Phil. 2:3-4 like this: **(Php 2:3-4)** When Paul uses the phrase “with all humility” he isn’t writing about an attitude that was consistent with the culture of his day. It has nothing to do with the way people normally deal with each other. This is a different attitude; it is a supernatural grace.

Then Paul points to **gentleness** or meekness. Gentleness has nothing to do with weakness, timidity or cowardice. On the contrary, the meaning of the word that is translated as gentleness is the word used of animals that were tamed and trained. The animal still has its strength and spirit, but its will is under the control of the master. Ex. Lion or horse. Meekness means that I am broken from the delusion that it is my life, my reputation, my story, my exultation that matters. Meekness means that I see the greatness and the wonder of my God and I am completely at His beck and call, for His use, for His purposes, for His glory. His righteousness, His ways are what really matter. I am under the control of my master, and I will be angry about the right things, the things that anger God, and I will be passionate about his kingdom and his righteousness, and I will not be angry about what may happen to me, or my plans, or my kingdom. I am at God’s disposal to do with as He pleases for his glory. A person like that and a church filled with people like that is one that can fulfill the calling of Christ, because there is one glory and one direction that matters – that of the Master.

This is not always easy. Even in church, people sometimes ignore or forget their calling to know Christ and glorify God. That is why Paul carries the point even further when he says we need to walk **with patience, bearing with one another in love.**

I personally am thankful that Paul includes this part about being patient and bearing with one another. None of us is perfect. Each of us still has indwelling sin. As Christians we are not dominated by sin or characterized by sin, but we still have a sin tendency which morally taints all that we think, say and do. The degree to which indwelling sin affects us in this life varies as our faith in Christ strengthens or weakens. Christians mess up, but what better opportunity is there to put on display the forgiving nature of God and the glory of his grace than for the church to demonstrate how real, imperfect people can bear with one another's failures to fulfill the calling of God to know Christ and to make His glory known? Colossians 3:13 speaks this truth frankly, that we must be always "bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive." That takes maturity.

What is the key to that kind of attitude manifested on this church? It is the word love. Jesus said to his followers in John 13 just after he had washed their feet. **"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."** This is not a wishy washy love. That love will constrain us to teach, reprove, correct, and encourage those who are falling short of the calling of Christ, but we do it in love. As Paul told the Thessalonians: **And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle (insubordinate), encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. (1Th 5:14)** We speak the truth in love so that we can fulfill our calling as the church and as followers of God and do it as one body in Christ. In fact everything that Paul has been writing in this section is leading up to this thought. It is all tending in the direction of this great matter of unity.

**The Motive of Walking Worthy – Eager to Maintain the Unity of the Spirit (v. 3)** Our calling as a church is to maintain – literally "to guard, to hold fast to, to preserve" the unity that Christ has forged in His church by His blood. The bond of our peace is the blood of Jesus Christ shed on our behalf to reconcile us to God and to one another. The unity of the church did not just happen – the unity of the church is established at the cost of the blood of Christ and by the irresistible, mighty power of the Holy Spirit to bring men and women, boys and girls to saving faith in Christ.

The very reason that we can be a united people is found in the fact that we are new men and women in Christ. We have been cleansed by His blood and redeemed and brought into a new relationship with Him and with one another. In Christ, every other thing that used to define who we are and what we are about has been swallowed up in our new identity in Christ. Do

you see it? Our identity is found not in our position in society, not in our race, not in our wealth or poverty, not in our heritage, not in our accomplishments, not in our education, not in our profession, not in our looks, not in our physical abilities. Our identity is found in Jesus Christ, our crucified and risen and reigning Savior. Our identity is found in the people of God, in our living for His glory, in our living a life of worship before the face of God. It is an infinitely higher calling than anything we can imagine. When we abandon our individual identities in the world for our eternal identity in Christ, we find out what real unity is all about. We are a part of something in the church that is greater and more profound than any of our lives could ever be individually.

The evidence of that unity is reflected in 1 Corinthians 1:10, **“Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you, but *that* you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”** Unity is more than gathering together in the same room, singing the same songs, and listening to the same pastor. It is deeper and richer than that. Paul calls the church to all speak the same thing and be perfectly united in your common understanding and in your opinions and judgments.

In fact, the unity to which we are called is the very thing for which Jesus prayed, **“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also**

**may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.”** The testimony of Scripture is that the Father and the Son are of one mind, one heart, one purpose, one vision, one direction, one Spirit. There is no division in the Godhead. There is a unity of joy and fellowship and will. That is the unity that God purposes in us and makes possible through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and is evidenced in us as we surrender to the leading of the Holy Spirit, die to ourselves and live to Christ. How glorious this kind of unity is!

It is this kind of unity of which the Psalmist wrote in Psalm 133, saying: **(Psa 133:1-3)**

Do you hear what David is saying? Where there is unity, there is the pouring out of the Spirit of God, of the anointing of God, of His manifest presence, flowing down from heaven. When the church comes together in unity, the Spirit of God is poured out in abundance. The presence of God fills the temple. The fragrance of life smells up the entire community. It is lavish. It is as if the dew of Mt. Hermon were falling upon the mountains of Zion. It is picturesque language describing fruitfulness and joy and growth and richness. That is the picture of the church dwelling in unity, beloved.

This is the unity that we are called to guard, the unity that we are called to protect. This calling to maintain such unity indicates that it must be kept carefully. To disrupt the unity of the body

of Christ is a grave sin. It is why Paul would write to Titus: **(Titus 3:10-11)** Unity is not just automatically maintained, it must be guarded and protected and pursued.

**The Doctrinal Foundation for True Unity (v. 4-6)** Our unity as the body of Christ is not based on wishful thinking or human reasoning; it is founded on the bedrock of God's truth. What makes us one is that:

We are **one body**. Our bodies are comprised of trillions of cells but one life. A body is produced because one original cell grows and grows and grows until it becomes a body but every cell shares that original life of that original cell. In the same way, we are members of the body of Christ. We share in common the life of Christ. And that is why it is impossible to glorify God apart from being a part of the body of Christ – you cannot glorify God by yourself with a life divorced from the body of Christ, and it's also why if you are a part of the body of Christ, you just can't up and leave it as if it is nothing. We are one body.

We have **one Spirit**. There is one Spirit who gives us life, one Spirit who makes us holy, one Spirit who joins us together in unity with one another and with God. It is the Holy Spirit in us who witnesses to us that we are children of God. While the circumstances of our individual salvation experiences may differ, the work of the Spirit in each of us was the exact same – awakening our souls to see our sin and to see the holiness of God and to see the great gulf between us, regenerating our hearts to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ beholding Him as the only Savior, granting us grace to repent and believe the gospel, sealing us with Himself, doing the work of sanctification. We are united by one Spirit.

We share **one hope**. Paul is referring to the yet future aspect of our salvation, the second coming of Jesus Christ, when we will be changed totally to be like Christ and share His glory.

We share only **one Lord**, Jesus Christ. Jesus is our 'kurios', our Lord. Together with the disciple Thomas, we call Him, ""My Lord and My God." There are not different "Christs" for different cultures. There is one Lord, Jesus Christ, who, by right of creation, is Lord of all; and by right of redemption, is the one and only Lord of his church and people; whom we are to worship and obey; He is the head of his body the church. We all have that same Lord.

We share **one faith**. There is only one gospel, there is only one revelation of the truth of God -- **the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints**. By this statement, Paul is referring to the entire body of truth delivered to us in the Word of God. The doctrine of the Trinity, the Sovereignty of God the Father, the deity and sonship of Christ, the divinity person of the Spirit; the Fall of man, the sinfulness of humanity, the corruption of humanity, and the inability of any of us to do that which is spiritually good; God's eternal love, eternal election, the covenant of

grace, the glory of particular redemption, justification by grace through faith, the peace and reconciliation by his blood, regeneration and sanctification by the grace of the Spirit, perseverance, the resurrection of the dead, and the future glory of the saints with Christ. These are not just extras, good things to know but optional. No, this is the truth that we are to share in common and is the source of true unity in the church. These are the truths of the faith, and they shape our lives and the life of a congregation. Truth is to the Church what bones are to my body. My bones give structure to my body and hold me together. All flesh and no bone is no body; it's a blob. And so are churches which have no foundation of biblical truth. They are not churches. John Stott wrote, "Since Christian love is founded on Christian truth, we shall not increase the love which exists between us by diminishing the truth which we hold in common. We must never compromise the very truth on which alone true love and unity depend." We have one faith.

We share **one baptism**. The baptism that sets us apart and identifies us as Christ's. And last Paul says, we have **one God and Father of us all, who is over all, and in all and through all**. Paul is saying that we all have the same God and Father.

There is nothing more glorious on this earth than a church, than the children of God joined together in unity, our hearts joined together to honor God and live for His glory. There is nothing like it on the face of the earth and it is a gift from God.

### **How We Maintain the Unity of the Spirit**

The unity of the Spirit in the body of Christ is a gift from God, but it is also something we must preserve and care for. How do we cultivate and preserve and care for that kind of unity?

First, bow under the Lordship of Christ. There are some in this place who do not sense the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace in this church. It may be that you are not sensing this unity because you are not at peace with God... It may be that you are not sensing this unity because you are rebelling against the Lordship of Christ... “

Second, order your life under the authority of Scripture. In the scriptures God lays out for us the biblical apostolic faith. That core of the Christian faith that the true church has held to and been held by from the first century right down to today. Submit yourself to the Word of God. Bring your wisdom into submission to the wisdom of God. When the Word of God is not set up as the supreme authority, division is inevitable.

Third, and along those lines, we must cultivate a healthy teachable spirit. Be willing to put yourself under the authorities that God has ordained for your instruction and for the building up of the body.

Fourth, keep short accounts with one another. Do not let the sun go down on your wrath. If there is something between you and a brother get it solved.

Fifth, invest in the body of Christ.

Sixth, have a vision that is larger than you and larger than West Salem.

Seventh, Pray. Pray that the unity of this body would be unshakable and would lead to the manifest presence of God in this place and blessing of God poured on His people for the praise of God's glory and for the salvation of the nations.

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