

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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“Walking Worthily” In The Body Of Christ

by Dan Trygg

“But to Him who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think-- according to the power inworking in us-- ²¹ to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. ^{4:1} I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, urge you to walk worthily of the calling of which you were called, ² with all humility and meekness, with patience, bearing-with one another in *agapē*-love, ³ making-every-effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ 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 all.”
Ephesians 3:20-21; 4:1-6

Beginning with Ephesians 4:1, Paul shifts from the doctrinal section of his letter to the practical section. This is characteristic of most of his epistles. **You cannot begin to interpret the first sentence of this chapter, however, without looking back.** The verse begins with a “therefore”, which is an adverb that describes a consequence or a conclusion that should be drawn from what had been stated before. Simply put, **when you see a ‘therefore’, you should ask “What it is *there for*?”** and look back to see how what the author is about to say follows from what he or she has already stated. So, once again, we should back up and review what Paul had said so far in the letter. **If you trace the *therefore*'s and the *for this reason*'s, and other logical connectors, we come back to 1:3, “God ...has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ”. *Everything in between expands on, delineates, and incites us to seek those things.* *Since* God has chosen us in Christ to be holy and blameless, to be designated as His heirs, and to come to be to the praise of His glory... *Since* He has called us to a life-changing hope, to an abundant allotted inheritance, and has made available His limitless power to accomplish His will... *Since* God made us alive, when we were spiritually dead, ...freed us from bondage to the devil and our own fleshly lusts, ...transformed us from being children of wrath, to being beloved new creatures through whom He can work, ...all by His initiative and grace, as we trust Him... *Since* God removed every barrier that kept us at a distance, and has brought us near to Him, joining us with others to become a dwelling place for His Spirit... *Since* He has made people from every nation to become one body in Christ to display His multifaceted wisdom through this called-out people, both to the people immediately around us and even before the spirit-beings in heaven... and, ...*Since* He desires to grow us up in Him, to reveal to us His incomprehensible love, in order that we might be filled-full with the full measure of His life abiding in us... ***THEREFORE, ...walk worthily of this incredible calling and privilege He has introduced you to.*** – Just take a few minutes to read that over a few times, ...and maybe even retrace the verses that these summary statements are taken from. ***THINK*** how great is this amazing grace, calling and opportunity that God has brought into *your* experience. ***PONDER, ...MEDITATE, ...REFLECT on these things. ASK THE SPIRIT to open your mind and heart to perceive these truths at a deeper level. THEN, when you have invested some time and prayer, ASK for the grace and empowerment of the Spirit to be able to “walk worthily”.*****

What does it mean to “walk worthily”? If you were to separate those two words from this context, what would come to mind? Where does your mind take you? Is it about living a life of obedience? Is it about going deeper with God? **What is “the calling” you were called to?** Our minds might take us in a dozen different directions. **Note the focus of Paul’s mind and heart here.**

He is concerned about how we treat one another in the body of Christ. We are to treat one another in *agapē*-love. And, he is especially concerned that we would be eager, zealous and diligent to “keep” the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace! Is that *your* first thought about what is most important in following Christ? ...or, what it would mean to “walk worthily of the calling to which *you* were called?” **Clearly, Paul had a very different perspective about the purpose, importance, and function of what life together in the body of Christ is supposed to look like.**

The original recipients of this letter had an advantage over us. They would have clearly seen that this letter was not primarily written to them as individuals, ...it was written to them as a group. The Greek word for “you” is plural, not singular, throughout the book (Some 45 times in six brief chapters. There are only three exceptions, where Paul seems to quote from the OT – 5:13; 6:2,3), and he also refers to “we/us” throughout, another plural personal pronoun, by which he includes *himself* as one of the group (30+ times). **Because of our Western, individualistic world view, we tend to not recognize the corporate reality of what Paul is describing.** We tend to simply reinterpret it as applying to “me” as an individual. **What does this mean?** It means that we tend to be oblivious to the idea that *this is a corporate calling, ...a group endeavor.* It is “the calling concerning which *y’all* are called” (4:1). **We have been individually recruited to a team!** It is not just about “me”; it is about “us”. **And our team has a calling, ...a joint calling. We are to work together to accomplish things, ...things that we cannot accomplish on our own. THAT is a HUGE realization!**

Who else talked about *agapē*-love and unity as being of crucial importance? Jesus did! When you read the gospel of John, you discover Jesus talking about *both* of these qualities as being of utmost importance. In John 13:34,35, He spoke of love as a “new commandment”. What made it new? Loving others was already an important idea, ...a teaching within Judaism. In fact, Leviticus 19:18 said that you were not to hate your brother, or take revenge on those of your people. Instead, you are to “love your neighbor *as yourself*.” **What made Jesus’ commandment different? He commands us to love “as I have loved you.”** Jesus did not just love those of “His people”, ...He loved *everyone*! Further, **He did not just love them as He loved Himself. He loved them more than He loved Himself. He was willing to put others before Himself!** In Philippians 2, Paul develops this more. We are not to think only of our own needs, but also the interests of others. Even though Jesus was God, and had everything, He was willing to empty Himself, become a person living among us, and be a Servant, He was willing to give Himself in complete obedience to God to serve us, at great cost, ...in His case, even to giving up His own life. We are to be like THAT! This is not simply self-sacrifice. **This is voluntarily giving of self, ...at God’s leading..., in order to benefit others. This is no ordinary love. It STANDS OUT! Jesus said it would be an identifying mark of those who follow Him.**

What about unity? In John 17:20-23, **Jesus prayed that the Father would make us “one”, “...that even as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they might be in Us, in order that the world may believe that You sent Me.** And the glory, which You have given Me I have given to them, in order that they might be one just as we are one; I in them, and You in Me, in order that they might be having-been-matured unto one, ...*in order that the world might experientially-know that You sent Me, and loved them even as You loved Me.*” The word “one” is neuter throughout. **In other words, He is praying that the Father would make us “one thing”.** The visible manifestation of that “oneness” in our care for, and our interactions with, one another will be noticeable. **It will STAND OUT** in a world of selfishness, divisiveness and disorder. **It will convince the world that Jesus was sent by God because He loves us.** The “glory” which Jesus has given to us is the Holy Spirit. It is His life within ours that makes us “one” with God.

Notice that Paul talks about how we are to “keep the unity (one-thing-ness) of the Spirit”. It is something **we already have**, in that the Spirit already lives within us. But we are to “guard, pay attention to, preserve, observe” the one-ness of the Spirit. **We have it; but we must look for it, follow it, keep it in view, and preserve it. We can also “lose it” in the sense of disregarding it, or turning aside from it.** The Spirit is in us. He will not be of two minds, or at cross purposes with Himself. He will bring us together. It is our sin, our selfishness and small-mindedness that separates and divides us. **We need to learn to recognize and come into agreement with the Spirit, who is among us. When we are one with the Spirit, we will be one with each other. This is a process of discovery, growth and self-discipline.** Jesus prayed that we might be “having-been-matured into one (thing)”. That is describing the *completion* of a process of growth. When we become united into one, the world will recognize that Jesus was sent from God, and that He loves them. **This oneness will stand out as unusual, beautiful and only explainable in terms of God.**

We must step back from the ideal for a moment to remember that we don’t start out here. Again, Paul is presenting all these amazing word pictures to incite us to pursue. We have been called out from the world, and called together to become an effective team to accomplish whatever God has for us to do. **We don’t begin as established, mature Christians, who understand or have experienced all of these things.** Nor are the other team members there, yet. **We are joined together with people who are imperfect, sometimes annoying, who can try our patience and stretch our tolerance, ...and we ourselves are people like that! But, God has called us, ...us, ...this group of people, ...to become a team of spiritually mature people, ...people who are deep in faith, filled with the Spirit, and who have learned to love one another and have discovered to discern and defer to the unity of the Spirit. When we are individually filled with the fullness of God, to become like the glove on His hand, or the mouthpiece through which He can speak, ...what do you think could happen if we all, as a group, learned to operate that way?**

Walking worthily recognizes those possibilities as real potentialities. Those who “walk worthily” want to preserve the unity of the Spirit, keep everyone engaged and moving forward in their faith walk, so that we all can become spiritually attuned and prepared for what God can do with a community of people who are unified together and directed by Him. **In a world of many backgrounds, Paul reminds us that there is only one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. Wherever we came from, we must put aside differences that get in the way, so that we can walk in the unity of the Spirit.** Some of our unique experiences and backgrounds will become helpful and celebrated, but, for now, the goal is to *come together, to find and walk in the unity of the Spirit. How do we “walk worthily”?* **What does that look like?** “...with all humility (lowly-mindedness) and meekness (gentleness, humility, considerateness and teachableness) with patience (keeping anger at a distance), bearing-with (showing tolerance, putting-up-with, accepting) one another in *agape*-love, being-zealous (eager, making-every-effort) to keep (guard, pay attention to, keep watch over) the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” **We walk worthily by “getting low”, by making room for one another, not getting angry, but trusting God to transform each of us to become an effective team member.**