

Ephesians 4:1

The Christian Walk

Introduction

Chapter 4 marks the beginning of another main section of the epistle. First section was on Christian doctrine. Now dealing with Christian practice. Having explained all that God has done, Paul now sets out all we who are redeemed should do in response. Mind-stretching theology is now followed by down-to-earth implications in every day living.

Ephesians 4:1 lays down a general principle about the Christian life, before going on to look at details and particulars in the rest of the chapter. He beseeches, or urges, them to walk worthy of the calling with which they have been called. “Beseeches them” – the third weapon in the preacher’s armoury – he has already taught and assured them, then prayed for them, now he appeals to them. Instruction, intercession and exhortation – three basic means the preacher uses under God to accomplish his task.

Paul’s words direct us to consider the Christian life as a walk, a walk which logically follows on from what he has taught us, and which must be worthy of our calling.

The Christian life as a walk

Preference here for the A.V. and some editions of the N.K.J.V. **I appeal that you walk worthy.** Other versions have **lead a life worthy** or **live a life worthy.** At the end of the day they mean the same thing, but seems a loss in changing the word “walk”. “Walk” is the literal rendering of the Greek περιπατεω from which we get the word peripatetic. There is something very helpful and suggestive in calling the Christian life a walk. To walk indicates movement, purpose, a goal in view. Steady advance towards goal. Perseverance till goal is reached. Use of mind in deciding to start. Use of heart in desire to continue. Use of will in determination to arrive. All these ideas are involved in the Christian life - progress, goal, perseverance, use of mind, heart and will.

Much of biblical instruction about the godly man’s life is written in terms of a “walk”. Walk after God in obedience (Deuteronomy 13:4). Walk before God in His presence (Genesis 17:1). Walk with God in fellowship (Genesis 5:22). And how many familiar verses express our conduct in terms of walking. The godly man does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly (Psalm 1:1). He walks in God’s law and statutes and ways (Psalm 119:1). Knows when he walks contrary to God – God walks contrary to him. Assurance that God withholds no good thing from them that walk uprightly (Psalm 84:11). When walks through the valley of the shadow of death, he fears no evil (Psalm 23:4).

In the New Testament, the newly baptised person walks in newness of life (Romans 6:4), walks by faith and not by sight 2 Corinthians 5:7), when he walks in the Spirit he

does not fulfil the lower nature (Galatians 5:16). When looking for a model of Christian living, he looks at how Christ walked.

And in Ephesians, how prominent this word is: walks in good works (Ephesians 2:10), walks in love (Ephesians 5:2), walks as children of light (Ephesians 5:8), walks circumspectly or carefully before the world (Ephesians 5:15), and here he walks worthy of his calling in Christ (Ephesians 4:1).

We live in a world where so many meander or drift aimlessly through life, with their backs toward the creator and His will, so life has no real meaning at all. The believer is reconciled to his maker through Christ. Knows where he is going. Has an aim and direction and purpose. Makes steady progress, daily advance. Has companion on the walk, who has promised never to leave him or forsake him. And as he walks in the Spirit, he is enabled to face difficulties on the walk – unpopularity, trials of going in different direction from the crowd – as he lives in an unsympathetic atmosphere.

Christian life as a walk follows logically from truth taught in earlier part of epistle

I therefore beseech you, says Paul. “Therefore” is the key word. In the light of the truth about election, redemption in Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit, the grace of God in bringing salvation, membership of Christian church, experiences of Christ dwelling in heart, being filled with all God’s fullness – live and walk in a way worthy of your calling. This is about riches and responsibilities; doctrine and duty; wealth and walking; belief and behaviour; truth and practice. They are locked together. Essential to hold both together. How often we major on one or the other.

Some are fascinated by doctrine, especially those of intellectual ability. They love books and debating and discussion. For some, they love exploring the fine shades of meaning, splitting hairs, discussions which have no bearing on every day life at all. Spurgeon said, “I know a minister whose shoe latchet I am unworthy to unloose – who is great on the ten toes of the beast, the four faces of the cherubim, the mystical meaning of badger skins, the typical meaning of the windows of Solomon’s Temple; but the sins of business men, the temptations of the times and the needs of the age, he barely ever touches upon. Such preaching reminds me of a lion engaged in mouse hunting, or a man of war (warship) cruising after a lost water butt”. Doctrinal understanding is vital and crucial. But it is equally important that these truths be applied and worked out in daily life.

Then there are those whose emphasis is only on the practical side of the Christian life. They say it does not matter what you believe as long as you live a Christian life. Society has a new morality, because it has given up on old theology. Equally fatal. It matters enormously what you believe, because what you believe greatly influences how you live, like night following the day.

Doctrine provides motivation and explains what resources are available to us and warns us of dangers in living the Christian life. Need to grasp truth and doctrine – they are foundational, give stability. Then learn what this must lead to, how we should practice and why. The New Testament is balanced like this. **Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them** (John 13:17). **Christ gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that**

are his very own, eager to do good (Titus 2:14). Augustine said, “Give what you require, then ask what you will”. How important to be balanced and not lop-sided.

How many heresies in the history of the church and modern cults have arisen because of lack of balance. Taking a text out of context. Harping on about one thing instead of seeing it in the total context of the Bible. Need to take teaching of Bible as a whole. Never pick and choose, else soon go off the rails. Need doctrine and experience and practice.

So this word “therefore” which the apostle is using is very important. Let’s apply the principle for a moment: “Blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ” – therefore be grateful and let your life show your gratitude; “God’s sovereignty in election and predestination” – therefore let peace of God rule your heart; “Membership of Christian church” – therefore love one another. We cannot have Christ in parts. We take the whole Christ. So we need the whole Bible in order to be balanced, well-rounded, well-equipped, well-furnished Christians.

Christian life as a walk will be worthy of calling with which we have been called

Christian life follows from the doctrine we believe and hold fast to, and it will be worthy, it will adorn and make beautiful, the calling with which we have been called. Here is one of the great words which describes God’s dealings with us is “we have been *called* to Himself”. Not just that we heard the Gospel message when it was preached generally to all men. But it came personally to us. Called by name, spoke to us as if there was no one else in the world. And as He spoke, He drew us to Himself and enabled us to repent and believe. Power came with the call. **Lazarus, come forth** (John 11:43) – power in the word spoken.

Theologians term “Effectual Call” c.f. εκκλησια The church are the “called out ones”. Out of darkness into His marvellous light. Being a Christian is not just someone who has decided to take up a certain kind of life. Not something we decided to do. The Christian is someone in whose life God has worked. Called, drawn, made alive. And so – the Christian life is to be worthy of that calling. **Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ** (Philippians 1:27). **Live a life worthy of the Lord** (Colossians 1:10). **Live lives worthy of God who calls you** (1 Thessalonians 2:12).

God’s dealing with us, His saving us and calling us, is the highest motive and reason why we should live holy, godly, Christ-like lives. Our lives must match our calling. And that applies in every conversation, place, relationship, task. Christians are those whom God had dealt with, put forth His power upon, called to Himself. They must live to bring credit and glory on the family of God and on God Himself. C.f. anxious mother, sending child to party, “behave yourself, don’t let us down”.

Conclusion

The Christian life is a walk – involves progress, goal, companionship. If we grasp the truth of the Gospel, we are bound to live in this way. Result is that life is worthy of our calling.

Finally note how Paul clinches his argument: **As a prisoner for the Lord** ἐγὼ ὁ δεσμιός. Because of his loyalty to the Lord, he is a prisoner in a Roman jail. And in deeper sense he is the Lord's prisoner. Surrendered all to Him. Not "Do as I say, but not as I do", but "Do as I say and do". Paul led from the front. Required his readers to do no more than he himself had done.

When we know we are His bond-slave, servant, prisoner, that we are not our own because a price has been paid, then there is no question how we should live our lives.