

# 11/17/2019 - Ephesians 4:1-3

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] I want to welcome you again if you are new to Grace and Peace. We are really glad that you have come to worship with us today. If you are new, we have been in a sermon series in the book of Ephesians.

We've been walking through that book. This Sunday is going to be the last Sunday that we're in this book this calendar year. Next Sunday, one of the elders who is part of the oversight of this church plant is going to be here and he's going to be preaching. I'll be here.

But he's going to preach Sam Brown. He's wonderful. I'm really excited to introduce you to him. And then the Sunday after Thanksgiving is the first Sunday of the Advent season, the season where we get to turn our attention to the coming Christ.

And I want to particularly invite you to be here those weeks of Advent. We've got some special songs. We're going to change up some of the things we're doing in the worship service.

I think it's going to be really beautiful and wonderful times. So make plans to be here starting December the 1st right after Thanksgiving. And we'd love to have your family and others that Sunday after Thanksgiving because some of you will be gone.

[ 1 : 0 8 ] So we need you, you know, bring your family. Make up for the people who are gone. Okay, let's look together at Ephesians chapter 4. I, therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've 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.

Amen. Let me pray. Father, would you bless your word today? May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be pleasing and acceptable to you, our rock and our Redeemer.

Amen. I've told many of you the first time I came to Chattanooga was when I was a sophomore in college. I grew up in Dallas. And some friends of mine convinced me to work at a camp down on Lookout Mountain, down in the Alabama part of Lookout Mountain.

And so after my sophomore year, it was May, and these three other guys, I'd only met one of them before. They were all guys at the University of Texas, the real UT. And they came and they picked me up.

I like that. They picked me up and we drove. We got on the road on I-20 and came out here. And I remember vividly driving through the gates at Alpine Camp.

[ 2 : 3 2 ] And there were all these like southern guys who were all kind of waiting. Everybody had gathered up at the front and they were like throwing Frisbees, which none of my friends did. And they were from all these schools that I'd never, I could hardly even heard of at that time, like Auburn and Ole Miss.

I did not know University of Mississippi was Ole Miss. I didn't know that. And Tennessee and Georgia and Vanderbilt and all these things. And they had that kind of swoopy, you know, frat boy hair.

And they were wearing Chacos and Birkenstocks. They were listening to different music than I listened to. This was a, I had this distinct feeling that I had entered a completely new and unfamiliar world.

And I met this guy. His name was Richard Pittman. He's still a good friend of mine. And he and Richard kind of saw my wide eyes and he said, Hey, come on, let me show you where we're going to go.

And he threw my bag into a truck and we drove around to the cabin. And he put my bag down next to his and next to his bed. And of course, he didn't even sleep in the bed. He slept outside just because these guys were weird.

[ 3 : 40 ] And I remember laying in bed thinking, Okay, I've entered this new world. Something is unfamiliar and I need to get used to it.

But I also at the same time had this rock solid conviction, This is exactly where I wanted to be. It was new. It was different. It was unfamiliar. But it's where I needed to be.

I feel like that's the feeling you get when you, If you've been reading along through the book of Ephesians, You get to chapter 4 and you realize it's a transitional verse, Which taking everything that Paul has done before now, And he's saying, therefore now, And you kind of realize, Oh, he's taken me to this whole new world.

This world of God's grace. That God has been active in the world to bring about blessing for people. It's a world where people get raised from the dead.

It's a world where sinners get reconciled to God. It's a world where our greatest joys in life are found from God as gifts from God.

[ 4 : 51 ] It's a new world. But if I'm honest, it's not totally familiar. You know, I don't know if you're like me. If you've been a Christian for a while, You don't automatically wake up in the morning and think, Oh, I'm in this new world and isn't it great?

Most days we wake up and it may be hours or days before we realize, Oh, wait, I'm actually living in God's world. And it's totally different than my natural inclinations, My natural assumptions about the way that things ought to work.

And it feels unfamiliar at times, just like I had at Alpine. But for Paul, there is something unnatural about this, And he's trying to draw you into this.

And the language he uses is that he's calling, That God is calling us in. That first verse is really the key verse. I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called.

It's redundant. The calling to which you've been called. Maybe Paul could have come up with a better word there, but he didn't. He wants you to see that you are called. Do you still experience, if you've been a Christian, So I'm going to talk to two groups of people.

[ 6 : 07 ] Number one, if you've been a Christian for a long time, Do you still experience any wonder in the gospel? If you're not a Christian, Or you've just kind of renewed your faith in some way, Do you actually see Christianity as the core and center of your life?

Or is your faith simply this kind of convenient add-on to your otherwise normal life? You know, I think it's really hard sometimes for us to grasp the magnitude that Paul wants us to feel.

Paul wants you to see yourself in a new world, And in that new world to see yourself more clearly, And to develop the courage to live faithfully in it.

Here's the summary of what Paul wants you to see. The first, it's this. You are called to walk in God's new world of grace. You are called. You, individually, specifically, personally, Are called by God to walk in His new world of grace.

So let's just look at that. You're called to walk. Those two kind of big words that he uses. You're called. Calling is, it's Paul's shorthand for everything that's gone before now.

- [ 7 : 31 ] Everything he's talked about to this point. You are called by God. In fact, he's used this back in chapter 1. But if you remember, if you just want to go and blow your mind, Read chapter 1 of Ephesians this afternoon.
- Because it's amazing. Paul says that each one of us, if we are in Christ, We are blessed by God. We are chosen by name.
- Chosen by God. We are elected. He has put His love upon us by His choice. He says that you are adopted into His family.
- He has lavished His gifts of grace upon you. He has sealed you by His Holy Spirit. All of that is under the heading of, You are called by Him.
- It's this fundamental idea that Paul has. He's saying, You've been invited and welcomed into this new world of God's grace and His salvation. And that's amazing.
- [ 8 : 33 ] Paul's saying that the fullness of God's gifts are resting upon you Because He has called you to be a part of it. It's the world where He reigns and no one else does.
- It's the world where you are His child. You are no longer alienated. That's the world that He's living in. Now, He's using this idea of calling.
- And we use the word calling in a lot of ways, And so it kind of gets confusing. You know, we talk about being called to ministry, perhaps. Or being called to marriage.
- Or being called to a particular job pursuit or a particular decision. That's not what Paul is talking about here. He's not talking about those particular callings. He's talking about the general idea that every Christian is called by Christ.
- They are called to be His child. To be in relationship to Him. To be made right by Him. And to be sent out in service to Him. Now, that begins to take particular callings.
- [ 9 : 36 ] But He's talking in general sense first. All Christians are called to this new life in the world of grace. You know, and for some people, that can actually be a disturbing idea.
- Because what it's saying is that God is the one who is calling you and you are His. You are owned, in a sense. You remember when Buddy the elf realizes that he's really a human and not an elf?
- You remember how, like, disorienting that is? How much he hates the fact that he's actually a human and not an elf? I think sometimes when we begin to wake up to the fact that God is the one who is primary in our lives.
- And He is calling us. We wake up to this realization that, oh, wait a minute. I'm not the center point in my life. You know, it's not the world revolving around Benji.
- It's God at the center. And I am in His world. I am in His orbit. Not the other way around. And that can be really disorienting.
- [ 10 : 45 ] And actually can be kind of frustrating for people when they begin to see that. If that's you, you need to sit in that difficulty.
- And you need to wrestle with, why is it so difficult to believe that God might be calling me for His purposes, and those might be a different idea than what I always thought that I wanted for my life?
- Os Guinness is a writer, and he summarizes the idea of calling this way. And I'll put, I've got a couple of quotes. I'm going to put them on the website. If you see, and there's a little, a little, a cool little QR code in your bulletin.
- You can snap that thing with your picture app, and it takes you to our website. And we've got kind of notes for the sermon series on there, and I'll put this on there. There's also a place where you can ask questions.

So, you know, make yourself available to that. He says this, Calling is the truth that God calls us to Himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have, everything is invested with special devotion, dynamism, and direction, lived out as a response to His summons and His service.

[ 12 : 01 ] Everything is to Him. The word for calling is kaleo, and that root forms the word ekklesia, the church.

We are the called out ones, sent out for God. And that calling is not abstracted. It's not just some sort of idea, but it actually takes a physical form.

It requires a response from us that is real and true. Think about it in the Scriptures. Adam was called by God. He was named by God. Now, Adam didn't do a very good job of walking in God's ways, but God continues the pattern.

He calls out Abraham. He changes Abraham's name. He says, Abraham, I want you to walk that way, to that land. And Abraham calls, or Abraham walks. And that's how Abraham became the father of our faith.

Moses. God called Moses and sent him to walk back into Egypt to lead the people out. God. This happens over and over in the Scriptures.

[ 13 : 07 ] The Apostle Paul was called by God on the Damascus Road. God changed his name and called him to go to the ends of the earth. The disciples.

Jesus walked around and called disciples to Himself. We are called. There's this fundamental link between being called by God and then walking in obedience to Him.

There's a call and there's a response. Like a call to worship. A call and a response. There's this cool word picture here in verse 1.

I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called. The word worthy there is this cool word axios. And what it is, it's actually a picture.

It's a scale. You know, like the scales of justice. You know, there's a post going up and then there's a crossbar and it hangs down. There's two pans that have like, you know, cool gold, you know, chains or whatever.

[ 14 : 07 ] And you go in and you say, well, I want to buy a pound of flour or corn or whatever. And then you get an iron weight that weighs one pound. And so they become equal. They become axios.

They become worthy. What Paul is saying is, is your calling needs to be equal to your walking. Your calling needs to be equal to your response.

There should be a worthiness, an equality between what God has done in your life and what he is asking of you to obey him in.

One of my old pastors, in fact, one of Brian and Reby's old pastors together, he used to say that this is the calling and walking. It's like belief and behavior.

The things that we believe affect the ways that we behave. Your beliefs inform your behaviors. But your behaviors reveal your real beliefs.

[ 15 : 10 ] The way you behave reveals what you really believe. Belief and behavior. Call, response. Calling and walking. They're linked.

Okay, so walking. That's the calling piece. Walking. Walking. Once you are called, you must respond by walking worthy of or equal to that calling. This becomes one of Paul's favorite words.

He's going to use it five times in the second half of Ephesians. So in the first half, three chapters, there has been 56 verses and there's been one command.

In the whole first three chapters of Ephesians. From this point till the end, there's like dozens of commands. Paul is changing the way he's talking about things.

He's talking about walking. We read from Psalm 1, Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked. Chapter 2 talks about how we walk in newness of life.

[ 16 : 11 ] Walking with good works. There's a writer named Rebecca Solnit and she says this about walking. I love this quote. She says, Walking is itself the intentional act closest to the unwilling rhythms of the body, to breathing and to the beating of the heart.

It strikes a delicate balance between working and idling, between being and doing. Walking is both a means to an end and an end itself.

It is both travel as well as destination. She says, I like walking because it is slow. And I suspect that the mind, like the feet, works at about three miles an hour.

If this is so, then modern life is moving faster than the speed of thought or thoughtfulness. Isn't that interesting? That walking, walking is this slow, deliberate, unimpressive, but life-creating activity.

And that's the image that Paul is choosing to use. He could have used another verb. He could have talked about behave in a way that's worthy of your calling. He could have said live in a way that's worthy of your calling or act in a way.

[ 17 : 33 ] Those are more active verbs. They're more impressive. But instead, he says, walk. Walk. When we walk, we're committing to a process.

Things are in motion, but the results aren't quickly identified or realized. To walk is to confine yourself to a certain space.

She says that people walk at about three miles an hour. Think about speed. You know, when you're passing something at 65 miles an hour, you can't see very much about it.

Right? I mean, you see the big orange of the Home Depot sign, and that's about it. And then you're moving on. At 30 miles an hour, you may be picking up a little bit more of what's happening.

You might see that there are the shape of buildings. You might be able to see what's on sidewalks or people that are there. But when you slow down even more to like 15 miles an hour, maybe on a bicycle or something, you can begin to...

[ 18 : 33 ] Your other senses begin to get engaged. You know, you can smell something that might be coming out of a bakery. You can hear sounds that are coming from an auto shop. You can begin to notice things.

But when you're walking, all of your senses are engaged. You're hearing. You're seeing. You're smelling. You're touching. You're noticing. You're talking to other people.

You're interacting with other people. And I think that there's something about this that we don't live in a world that walks, do we? I've been to a lot of your houses, and I'm fairly certain that there's not one of you that can walk to a place where you can buy groceries within 45 minutes of your house.

Fairly certain. I'm not positive about everybody. Maybe the Griggs. Y'all are close. But we can't walk anywhere. We live in a world that is absolutely mediated by an automobile.

I have a friend, and she lives five doors down from me, and she drives her car to our house. Five doors. Now, she's at the bottom of the hill, so, you know, it's a big hill. I get it.

[ 19 : 43 ] But isn't that fascinating? The image that Paul wants to pick up is something that is not fast. It is not immediate. That the way that we live our lives in living out the calling that God has given us is something that is slow and deliberate and is actually very counter to the way that our culture moves.

I mean, one question you ought to ask yourself is, how is it, how is our soul being shaped by the physical environment that we're living in? How is your soul being shaped by suburbia?

That's where we live. Modern American suburbia. And it's shaping you. It's shaping the way your soul responds to God. It's shaping the way your soul responds to other people.

We have to be cognizant of that. You know, so what do we do with this? I want to take these things, calling and walking, and I just want to make two points of application to this.

First one is this. You are in process. You are, you're in process. A key aspect to growing in Christ is to realize the limited or the in-process nature of maturity.

[ 21 : 03 ] You have not arrived yet and you won't arrive until the day that Jesus returns. You are not everything that you want to be. If you feel like you have arrived and you are not in process anymore, that's a red flag.

Let me just tell you, your wife doesn't think so. God's way, in God's way, he is willing to, he, it is not important for God that we arrive at the end immediately.

Isn't that amazing? That God has saved us. He has a plan for us. He has called you. And yet he also knows that you won't arrive for a very long time.

J.C. Ryle was an Anglican bishop and used to say, you will never become what you are not right now becoming.

You're never going to become one day what you are not right now in the process of becoming. You're never going to get somewhere that you're not walking to. There's another way to say that.

[ 22 : 14 ] You know, I find, you know, you live in a city like Chattanooga. This is your Bible Belt culture, you know. You can just throw a rock and hit a church. And in a Bible Belt culture, you get a lot of language that people use and they don't really think a whole lot about.

And one of those pieces of language that I'm sure I grew up using is talking about your Christian walk, right? Your Christian walk, which is coming from this passage. And people are taking that from there.

But in many ways, I think that has taken on this super spiritual kind of tone. You know, my walk with Christ, my Christian walk. I think the reality is, though, that that's just all talk.

It's just all talk. Most Christians I know do not have a regular habit of reading God's Word and spending time in prayer.

Many do, and I'm thankful for that. But many don't. That's something that we want at Grace and Peace to become a part of our life, that we are living in those habits together.

[ 23 : 19 ] You'll hear more about that as we get to Christmas. Christmas. But there's more to life than just your personal devotions.

I mean, the Apostle Peter and Paul, they say things like, visit widows and orphans in their distress. They say things like, go and be with the prisoners because you were once a prisoner.

And they don't think about that as like the really spiritual Christians who have their Christian walk all together. That's like the low bar. You know, if you call yourself a Christian, you ought to be with the weak and the vulnerable.

That's not like a feather in your calf. You're not like really succeeding when you go and are with the weak and the vulnerable. That's like just the lowest bar of entry. You see, what Paul is calling us to is a life that is far bigger than we want to give it credit for.

It's calling us into this whole world where resurrection happens, where people get rescued by grace. It's a world where our priorities get put on the back burner as we follow where Christ calls us into particular places.

[ 24 : 35 ] It's a new world. And it becomes liberating. It becomes liberating to live there. But we're in process.

But we've got to see where it is we're headed. So we're in process. That's the first thing. You are in process, but that doesn't give you an excuse to not walk in the ways that he's called you to.

The second thing is this. We'll end with this. Walking in this way, worthy of the calling to which you have been called, means that we are able to live in light of eternity.

Walking in this way means that we're able to live in light of eternity. Well, what does it mean to walk in God's way? I mean, he does give us some clarification. I'm going to work on some of these things later on, but I do want to mention verses 2 and 3.

How should we walk? Well, with humility and gentleness and patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

[ 25 : 39 ] That's a great description of, that's a summary of the ethic of the Christian life. What are we to act like? Well, humility, gentleness, patience, all of those kinds of things.

They also happen to look a lot like Jesus. They happen to look a lot like the language Paul uses back in Philippians 2, where he talks about the great Christ him, who Jesus is.

Jesus looks a lot like this. We are to walk in a way that is worthy, equal to the way that Jesus walked. We are to begin to look like Jesus.

The goal for you, where you are headed in walking, is that you are going to become more like Jesus. You're not going to necessarily become happy and more comfortable.

You're not necessarily going to become more successful or more self-assured. You're going to become like Jesus. And look at what Jesus' life was. Jesus' life was a life of self-sacrifice, through which he found life.

[ 26 : 44 ] His was a life of death, through which resurrection was born, victory was achieved. His was a life that even though he had nothing, he possessed everything.

See, when you walk in that calling, you begin to embody in your own life the world of grace that God has welcomed you into, that Jesus has secured for you, that the Spirit is making possible for you.

You live as though that new life is, that new world is really true. One author says this, he says, the reconciliation of all things in the future, right, that great day, the new heavens and the new earth, is foreshadowed in the reconciliation of believers in the present.

The future reconciliation of all things is foreshadowed in our lives now. A demonstration to the cosmos of God's purposes in Christ.

Look, if you want to proclaim to the ends of the earth, if you want to proclaim to the very physical creation that we serve a God who reigns over everything and who is king over all this earth and he is returning one day, the way that you are to do that is to live in a life of walking in his ways and his faithfulness.

[ 28 : 18 ] That is a megaphone that is louder than anything else. The more and more you and I are shaped by God and his word and his grace and less by the culture in which we are living, less by the internal desires for selfish achievement and vanity, the more we will proclaim to this cosmos the redemption of Christ.

That's a great thing. Paul wants you to have more than you think you have. You have been called with more specificity and power and joy than you ever could think is true about you.

But you have been called to walk a road that is far more challenging than you want to engage in. And both of those things can be true at the same time. Thankfully, God is with us and Paul is there too.

Did you notice how Paul calls it, what he calls himself? I therefore a prisoner for the Lord. It's kind of a double entendre there. You know, he actually is in prison. But you know, he uses that kind of language of slave of Christ.

He uses that in other places. It's a double entendre. He's saying, I am a prisoner for Jesus and I am a prisoner to Jesus. Isn't that a great way to think of ourselves?

[ 29 : 47 ] We are prisoners in this world of sin and death and brokenness for Jesus. But we are prisoners to Jesus as well.

Our life-giving King. Okay. Let's stop there. And let's ask the Lord to help us to take this in.

Excuse me. Father, would you would you allow us to live in that world of grace in a more powerful way than we are accustomed to?

Would you do it in Christ's name? Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.  
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.  
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