

Journey To A Better Life

Lesson 7 . . . Living a Worthy Life (Ephesians 4:1-10)

Notes

The first verse of chapter four is the turning point in this epistle because Paul switches from the theological to the practical, from doctrine to duty. Paul has made it clear in the first three chapters that all believers are the recipients of the unsearchable riches of Christ. Therefore, we read in verse one: *As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.* The word translated *worthy* (*AXIOS*) means “of equal weight.” It is the idea of one thing being equal to another. Paul is saying we should try to live a life equal to the great blessings we have in Christ. This is essential if we are to have a “journey to a better life.”

How do we live a worthy life? The remainder of the book of Ephesians tells us, beginning with . . .

The Characteristics of a Worthy Life (4:2-3)

A worthy life has at least three characteristics, none of which comes naturally to us. Therefore, we must be motivated by all God has done for us in Christ, which was described in the first three chapters. If we are living worthy of all that Christ has done for us, we will first *be completely humble* (4:2a). This is the opposite of pride and conceit. As someone has said, “Humility is that grace that, when you know you have it, you have lost it.” Humility was a derogatory term in Paul’s day because it was a slave-like quality. However, it has been redeemed by the Gospel and represents a Christian virtue that is the opposite of arrogance and pride. What does Proverbs 11:2 tell us about pride and humility?

Humility doesn’t mean we see ourselves as worthless but that we see ourselves as God sees us, having immense value, but no more than anyone else. It means we are willing to accept God as our authority in life rather than being our own boss.

Humility will cause us to be *gentle* (Eph. 4:2). The word translated *gentle* refers to the breaking or domestication of a wild animal so that it could do useful work. The animal has to learn to accept control by its master and would therefore behave properly. *Gentle* means “power under control.”

To live a life worthy of our calling in Christ we must be *humble, gentle,* and third, we must *be patient, bearing with one another in love* (4:2). This is the opposite of being short-tempered. It is the attitude that bears insults, criticism, envy, etc. It means we will love people in spite of their mistakes and weaknesses because we realize we are all a little peculiar.

The reason God wants us to have these virtues is *to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace* (4:3). The absence of the preceding characteristics in our lives will jeopardize the *unity* of the church. Nothing prevents the church from fulfilling her purpose of glorifying God as does fussing, fighting, and lack of unity. After receiving reports that there was little unity in the Corinthian church, what did Paul appeal to them to do in 1 Corinthians 1:10?

If we are *to live a life worthy of the calling* we have received we must be *humble. . . gentle. . . and patient, bearing with one another in love* (Eph. 4:1-2). Not only will these virtues glorify God, but also they will be like a magnet, drawing people to Christ. People are drawn to our church not because of our beliefs but because of our behavior. Not only do we need to know the **characteristics**, but also . . .

The Basis for a Worthy Life (4:4-6)

The basis for our unity is *there is one body and one Spirit* (4:4a). There is only *one Spirit*, the Holy Spirit, and what does He do for us, according to 1 Corinthians 12:13a?

Because we are all baptized by the same Holy Spirit into one body, the church, we should all have the same purpose. Just as the physical body has many different parts that function for the betterment of the whole, so the body of Christ is made up of many individual parts, all of which should function for the betterment of the whole body. It is important that we not just see ourselves as individual believers but as a part of the body of Christ.

Not only is there *one body and one Spirit* but *you were called to one hope when you were called* (Eph. 4:4). We are all called to one hope, which



ultimately is heaven. In other words, we are all going to the same place. However, this hope involves more than being in a place called "heaven." What else is a part of this *one hope*, according to 1 John 3:2-3?

We will be like Christ in that we will have glorified bodies that are not affected by time or physical limitations. There is also *one Lord* (Eph. 4:5a), a fact the first century believers guarded with their lives. Many of them died rather than confess "Caesar is Lord," which was required yearly by Roman law. The first Christian confession of faith resulted from defiance of this law. Instead of confessing "Caesar is Lord," believers would say "Jesus is Lord," for which they would be put to death.

There is also only *one faith* (4:5b), which refers to a personal commitment to Christ, but it goes beyond that to denote the entire Gospel as revealed in the Word of God. There is just one faith that will get us to heaven, because what did Jesus say in John 14:6?

This *one faith* leads to *one baptism* (Eph. 4:5c). Since Paul has been discussing spiritual oneness, it is only logical that this is a reference to the baptism of the Spirit that makes believers a part of the body of Christ.

There is also *one God and Father of all, who is over all* (4:6a), which means God has never had and never will have an equal. He is supreme over all creation, and it is *through all* (4:6b), Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the church, that His plan of the ages is being executed. The phrase *in all* (4:6c) means God is present in everything, controlling and sustaining all things. He is not detached from His creation or His children. There is one God, yet in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These three are one in person and in purpose. They work together to bring to fruition the mystery of the ages—the church. In order for that goal to be reached, there must be spiritual one-ness in the church as there is in the trinity. Now that we have considered the **characteristics** and **basis** for a worthy life, let's find out how we get . .

The Ability To Live a Worthy Life (4:7-10)

While there is unity in the body of Christ, the church, there is also diversity. So, Paul writes: *But to each one of us grace has been given* (4:7a). The

word *grace* (*CHARIS*) refers to a grace gift or spiritual gift, which is the special ability God has given us to serve Him. It is not based upon any merit of our own but *as Christ apportioned it* (4:7b). Therefore, we cannot be envious of those whose gifts may put them in the spotlight, or look down on those whose gifts may seem, in the world's view, as less important than ours.

Our gifts have a spectacular origin. *This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train . . ."* (4:8). This is a quote of Psalm 68:18 and is a prophetic reference to Christ's return to glory.

Words simply do not have the power to describe the triumphal entrance of our Lord into glory after His death and resurrection. Can you imagine the thousands and thousands of angels and the stir in heaven with the victorious return of Christ as *he led captives in his train*? After a king won a victory he would bring home the spoils and enemy prisoners as evidence of the victory, parading them before his people. Over what enemy did Jesus win an eternal victory, according to 1 Corinthians 15:55-57?

Satan and his evil forces wanted to keep Jesus from becoming our Savior. He tried to kill Him at His birth in Bethlehem, and he tried to kill Him at His hometown in Nazareth (Luke 4:28-29). Finally, Satan had Him nailed to a cross in an effort to stop God's plan of the ages, but how does Colossians 2:15 describe the result of Christ's death?

He made a *spectacle* of his enemies by rising from the dead. The phrase, *he made a public spectacle*, is one word in the original language. It is the same root word used in Matthew 1:19, when Joseph was planning to marry the Virgin Mary. Why did Joseph want to marry Mary, according to Matthew 1:18-19?

Therefore, the phrase *he made a public spectacle of them* in Colossians 2:15 means that Christ disgraced Satan and all the power of evil publicly in front of all heaven when He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven.

Upon arriving in heaven, Jesus *gave gifts to men* (Eph. 4:8b). Like a triumphant conqueror distributing the spoils of war to his subjects, Christ

takes the powers He has won and distributes them through His kingdom—the church. Why did the distribution of spiritual gifts have to wait until Jesus ascended, according to John 16:7b?

The mention of Jesus ascending into heaven leads Paul to ask parenthetically, *What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions* (Eph. 4:9). The phrase *descended to the lower, earthly regions* could mean that between His death and ascension Jesus descended from heaven to earth, or that He descended into Hades, the realm of the dead, to announce His victory. Either interpretation is possible.

Paul continues in verse 10, *He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe*. Christ has ascended into heaven to *fill the whole universe* with His presence and power.

Living a worthy life requires that we know the **characteristics of a worthy life, the basis for a worthy life**, and that we have the **ability to live a worthy life**. How can you know if you are living a *life worthy of the calling you have received* in Christ Jesus (see Eph. 4:2-3)?
