

How Can We Walk Worthy?

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[0:00] How we doing? Good. I got a good? Alright, thanks Phil.! Always good.

No, Bart, you're always great.! Don't tell me you're great. Alright, take out your Bibles with me, please. And turn to the epistle of Ephesians, chapter 4.

Last week we began looking at just the first verse of Ephesians 4, where Paul makes the great transition.

He begins with the therefore, right? Based on everything that he has said in the first three chapters about how God has blessed us and saved us and created us into a work of His own.

And given us the gospel. Based on all those things, now therefore walk in a manner worthy. So today we begin to look at how he describes for us to walk in a manner worthy.

[1:09] What is that? How can we do that? How can I ever walk in a manner worthy, right? But Paul does lay out. And I find it a bit surprising how he lays it out.

It's not how I would lay it out. Thank goodness. Right? So, that's what we're digging into today. I want to start with chapter 3, verse 20, and read through chapter 4, verse 3.

So, if you're able, please stand as I read from the Holy Book. Ephesians 3.20, Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that is working within us, to Him is the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever.

Amen. I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, being diligent, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

So reads the word. Let us ask the Lord for enablement. Father, give us in these minutes, Lord, the eyes to see and ears to hear your truth.

[3:11] Give us hearts, Lord, that are soft, receptive, teachable. We talk about some subjects today that for some of us, for all of us, to measure our very heart for us.

They're not natural. And so, so, so teach us, convict us, change us, enable us to be a church, to be a community of people that are, that have all humility and gentleness toward one another.

this we ask because of Jesus and in His name we pray. Amen. Please be seated. I was almost ready to preach the whole sermon through the prayer.

in my first battle with depression, which was a 12-year saga, I learned a number of things because I had never experienced it before in my life.

I was 40 years old and it was a new thing to me. I was used to experiencing what I called a funk every year, you know, time of year when you just, you just had to endure, you just had to push through, you know, and then it would get better.

[4:45] Right? Well, this didn't work. Yeah, push, push, push. Months would go by, years are going by, doesn't stop. So, I started searching the scripture and I learned, first of all, from Psalm 119 how to pray through it.

There's a couple of sections in Psalm 119 that I prayed daily. I took long walks. I prayed through that. That helped battle it.

I learned from John 12 how Jesus dealt with a soul that was disturbed. His own soul was disturbed and how he dealt with that.

And I found a model for responding to that. Psalm 42 taught me how you worship when you're depressed because I value authenticity.

And so how do you worship if you're not happy? How do you worship, right, if you're not thankful? David did. Psalm 42. In fact, he found depression as his thirst for God in Psalm 42.

[5:55] And then in the book of Ruth gave me incredible perspective about finding hope in God's sovereignty when all your dreams are shattered.

When God takes away all that you thought you were called to do, that's huge. And then finally in 1 Peter 5 I found a secret.

Not a secret. You read the text. But for me it was a hidden thing. In 1 Peter 5 Peter talks about humble yourself under the mighty hand of God.

Right? And he will lift you up in his time. And I was being depressed. I was attracted to the lift you up part. I wanted the lift up part.

But according to Peter that came after humbling yourself under his mighty hand. And by the way the lifting up part was in his time. Right? In his season.

[7:02] Which is not my season. And so when I began to go through that trying to apply this humbling myself under God's mighty hand.

What is that? Right? And I learned that it meant to truly accept even the state of my depression as God's will as God's sovereign hand in my life.

and when I could accept that and be okay with it it would and it took a while to do that to trust God's sovereignty I found release for 12 years from depression.

After 12 years 12 years of freedom I literally felt the weight off my shoulders. But it so what I learned was humility is hard.

Humbling yourself under God's mighty hand is a whole nother step whole nother thing of acceptance and dealing with God's sovereignty in your life.

[8:24] I learned how God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble. And I bring all that up because today's subject is walking worthy with all humility and gentleness.

And humility and meekness or gentleness is where we start to walk in a manner worthy. That's where it starts.

That's where it starts. So we're going to focus on just two of those. Take us a little while to get through Ephesians 4.

And the reason is I mean I could give you all the stuff you know and I can give you the notes and give you all the answers definitions and get all that but we won't learn it.

we won't learn it. We learn it by walking in the word walking slowly in the word letting it sink in letting it absorb and this kind of important subject to the application of our life right to walk in a manner worthy how do I do that?

[9:40] If I just kind of say humility is this gentleness is this forbearance is this let's really take a good look at them I hope you will value that so last week we noted the appeal how Paul appealed to the Ephesians to walk worthy how he's appealing to us we see the big therefore right in chapter 4 1 therefore it's a logical link to all the words that were before it's all that therefore is based on basically chapters 1 through 3 and they lead to chapter 4 1 through the end of the book the practical application so from 4 chapter 4 on it's all practical it's how we live how we apply what we believe so since we've been chapter 1 blessed with all the blessings in the heavenly places in Christ chapter 2 since we've been saved by grace and we've been reconciled in a mysteriously unified body of

Christ a new creation and since we have this mystery of the Christ in the gospel that brings us Gentiles into equal standing therefore right let's walk worthy because of all this blessing that we've experienced so we looked closely last week at verse 1 and we saw two observations right one in the beginning of the verse he says I entreat you to walk I entreat you and so I just focus on that he's appealing to believers from a posture of grace not from a posture of command or control or shame or legalism or top down kind of thing his appeal to them in this incredible thing is I appeal I don't command I appeal I plead with you I beg with you I beseech you it's an emotional plea see I'm coming alongside I'm not coming down on you I'm coming alongside that's really really important because some folks get stuck in the in the oughts and the shoulds instead of appeal to you I come alongside you this is Paul he doesn't come as an apostle he comes as the prisoner of the Lord right and then secondly he appeals to them as receivers of grace he says I entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of what of the calling with which you've already been called you've received grace you've received the calling God has called you Christ has called you out that's the whole meaning of the church the called out ones right we're called out to him into fellowship with Christ we're a new creation so so that's what we saw last week so how do we walk worthy now we come to verse two how do we do it how can we do it so

I call these attributes or characteristics or distinctive! we're going to look at the first two humility and gentleness or meekness so the first characteristic walking worthy begins with all humility literally humility of mind because humility is a mindset humility of mind and he noticed the word all right what's that all humility not just partial humility but complete full humility every area kind of thing okay so what's humility what is all humility it's lowliness of mind literally lowliness of mind to have a low opinion of yourself in our culture that's a bad thing you're supposed to have a high opinion of yourself you're supposed to have high self esteem you're supposed to you know we want to stir up people's self esteem right well how does that fit in the gospel

I understand wanting to encourage self esteem but how does that fit with the gospel when the gospel is deny yourself when the gospel is don't trust yourself don't lift up yourself so here we are first two characteristics are not build yourself up but recognize have a right view of yourself a low opinion a deep sense of your own littleness like Paul did he considered himself the least of all the saints least that doesn't mean he doesn't have worthiness it doesn't mean he doesn't have confidence Paul has a lot of confidence Paul has a lot of gifts but in the scheme of things under God under the mighty hand of God he's the least and I'm the least I'm going to argue with him when I get to heaven who's the least in

[15:08] Greek culture so in the day that Paul was teaching this in the Greek culture in Ephesus humility is seen as weakness it's seen as weakness it's not positive it's not valued it's a negative contemptuous shameful thing humble people just walk all over so counter culture but the Bible has always valued humility humility in 1 Peter 5 he said Peter says be clothed with humility toward one another right God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble and Peter is quoting from the Old Testament God is opposed to the proud he's always been opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble God values humility and then

Peter goes on to say humble yourself under the mighty hand of God and he will lift you up see the way to experience God's grace is by going low lowly of mind so let's think of some examples what's humility look like okay Paul in Acts chapter 20 Paul talked about how he served in Ephesus for three years he preached and taught for three years he served them with all humility same phrase with all lowliness of mind what does that mean well he goes on to say I did not count my life dear to myself I was willing to sacrifice my life I did not cover their silver or their clothes or their possessions or anything that they had I did not so all humility means willing to sacrifice not self seeking secondly a second example we find in

Deuteronomy chapter 8 Israel Israel in the wilderness what did God do to Israel in the wilderness why did God send Israel into the wilderness right so in Deuteronomy is after the 40 years right so now he's telling them this is what I did it for this is why I did this I did it to humble you I did it to humble you to test you to see if you trusted me I gave you manna so that you would learn that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God I humbled you to learn to trust me I humbled you to learn to wait for my sovereign hand that's humility a third example Jesus tells a parable in Luke 18 remember he told the parable about the two men that go to the temple to pray one is a Pharisee and one is a sinner right and the Pharisee is praying thank you Lord that I you know I'm not like this man and you know thank you that I'm so great wonderful thank you and especially I'm not like this guy over here and this guy over here the sinner can't even lift his eyes up right he's so lowly of mind he can't even lift his eyes up he just says Lord have mercy upon me the sinner that's it that's his prayer just have mercy on me the sinner I'm a sinner I'm so undeserving all I can cry out for is mercy and Jesus summarized that by saying God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble that man was elevated that prayed for mercy one more example fourth example in

Philippians 2 Paul talks about humility as a lifestyle for us he emphasizes humility that we would have with others and he gives it some kind of surprising descriptions here but he also then gives the example of humility the prime example of humility which is Jesus himself so Philippians 2 listen to these words if there is any encouragement in Christ if there's any comfort from love any participation in the spirit any affection and sympathy then complete my joy by being of the same mind having the same love being in full accord and of one mind this is what I want you to do have that unity well how how do we do that he goes on do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit but in humility count others more significant than yourselves stop there what's humility do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit but in contrast in humility count others more significant than yourselves can we do that not naturally naturally who do we think is the most important person ourselves that's

just natural that's our that's our sin nature that's just what we're born with that's why that three year old child thinks he deserves the toy more than sister three year old child count others more significant in yourselves what does that look like well let each of you look not only to your own interest but also to the interest of others so what does all this look like what's the example well have this mind among yourselves have this this mindset right among yourselves which is yours in [21:42] Christ Jesus who here's the example who though he was in the form of God in other words he was the exact nature of God he did not count equality with God as a thing to be grasped or better translated did not count equality that he already had with God as a thing to be held on to not grasp after but to be held on to he already had the equality with God but what did he do what was his mindset he emptied himself how do you stop being God well you don't you just veil it he emptied himself by what by taking the form of a servant the exact nature of a servant so he goes from lord to servant he takes the exact nature of a servant the mindset of a servant that is serving others myself is last others are first being born in the likeness of man and being found in human form he humbled!

himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even death on a cross that's the example of all humility of mind like Christ and it's just stunning isn't it that Jesus has that mindset that our lord in heaven has that mindset to empty himself and so Paul is saying have the same mindset step down off your throne step down off your lofty perch!

Step down off of your what's the word nowadays not entrusted entitled yeah step down from your entitled position and serve so how can we become this humble how in the world can we become this humble how can I be like Jesus it is not natural it is not the thing that just you know I just do when I get out of bed in the morning it takes the power of God that's how we do it it takes the conviction of the Holy Spirit it takes transformation by the Holy Spirit it takes walking with the Spirit right it takes that mindset that activate it means activating our faith not just you know but in prayer confessing our need for mercy and dependence and asking him to enable us this day to walk worthy with all humility so that's first characteristic is that enough should we stop there that's it's kind of like hard enough second characteristic walking worthy also involves the characteristic of gentleness this word gentle is also often translated meekness so

King James version would translate it meek so what is gentleness well the word actually means mild soft does that bug you a little bit bugs me soft I don't want to be soft oh he's a softie he doesn't stand up for anything it doesn't mean that it doesn't mean you don't stand up for things it's a it relates to how you treat others softness a mildness right it's and by the way this word meekness or gentleness is one of the fruits of the spirit so we do not produce this characteristic we bear it right it's a fruit it's something we bear because we it's the work of the spirit working through us I can't make gentleness happen not genuine one it so being gentle versus harsh with people anybody get harsh anybody have that issue again just me

I hate it when they get harsh right it's not gentle here's the picture the picture is a horse a horse a big powerful horse how so picture a wild horse right okay yeah I'm gonna catch that guy and I'm gonna train him right well not me maybe Ron maybe it's like okay whoever thought of that right you know who my ancestors did anyway so when you have a horse that's actually been tamed right tamed so to speak all that power under control so the Greek word for this meekness is applied to a horse that's under control you ever been a trail ride we'll give you the gentle one we give you the meek horse he's soft and mild he won't buck on you he won't you know throw you he usually will follow directions that's the picture though it's power under control it's not weakness power under control it's all that power harnessed right so here's the idea and this is it's the idea of gentleness is to be unresisting to bear offense without resentment does that sound good that sound like something you want to do bear offense without resenting to willing to waive your rights is gentleness to overlook versus fight or defend yourself that's meekness you know how much power control that takes especially for some of us

[28:29] I didn't have any of this when I was a teenager I was happy to fight I was happy to resist I was happy to I'm not waiving any rights right that kind of thing made my best friend getting into a fight so my best friend Artie he was our middle linebacker in football and he's about that wide Artie was a dude and all conference and everything so that's the guy I chose to fight and I was thankfully quicker than Artie so when he swung at me I kind of ducked but he still caught my back and I went rolling and then I just laughed I just laughed and we became best friends after that anyway you want Artie on your side how did

I get into that oh unresisting right fighting yeah so fighting that can be stupid you end up fighting someone like Artie so let's get some examples okay Moses in Numbers 12 Moses was called the most meek person the most humble person but really it translates to the word meekness the most meek of everyone Moses and the example given in Numbers 12 is when he was criticized about the wife that he had right because he married this Ethiopian woman right I forget her name she had a beautiful name Zipporah Zipporah yeah it was cool so this is the you know so when he comes back from water this is the daughter of the priest he's come back with so his sister Miriam got a problem with that woman so instead of you know

I'm Moses don't you talk about my wife whatever whatever he bears it he overlooks it he doesn't go after Miriam God does God does but he didn't he let it go he left it with the Lord how humble Moses was Moses had all kind look at all the authority he had look at the miracles that he did or that God did through him right but he was meek that didn't puff him up it just David had humility now here's a tough warrior guy here's a guy that's used to fighting but there were times when he had gentleness in 2nd Samuel 16 when he was cursed by Shammai the one who was from the house of Saul who threw stones at him right when he's returning this guy is throwing stones at him calling him names cursing him out and all

David's men are used to David being the warrior man go get him man you want us to take him down Lord what do you want and David David says this may be from the Lord leave it alone leave it to the Lord that's gentleness not taking it not fighting not retaliating and then there's the example of Jesus in Matthew 11 where Jesus says come take my yoke right all who are weary and heavy laden come take my yoke why for I am gentle I am meek my yoke is easy and my burden is light come to me take my yoke Jesus is gentle when he entered Jerusalem in Matthew 21 here he's coming announcing his kingship right he knows they will understand the symbolism as he gets on the donkey and he comes in with the palm branches and the hosannas and all of that and of course the power structure is very affunded by this telling him to stop all this he comes in he comes in as a king but he comes in as a gentle king even as

Zechariah talks about gentle on donkey right on the colt of a donkey this king this king could have come in and claimed war Jesus as king he could have I mean he did go into the temple do some temple cleansing but he could have gone a lot farther than that and he did not because that's not why he came but that's his gentleness Timothy second Timothy Paul tells Timothy that when you correct someone who's opposing you okay even when you correct someone opposing you so here's young Timothy right he's a little timid he's not so bold he's not as got the confidence Paul does but Paul's encouraging Timothy don't don't back down when you deal with an opposer do it with gentleness still do it with gentleness you may have to you know reject them you may have to kick them out something like that right when he talks about people causing divisions he just says just take them out take them out they'll harm the flock but he says even though they're opposing you from your perspective they're opposers they're enemies but go with gentleness

[34 : 31] Paul says because maybe God might give them repentance because of your gentleness so keep the door open okay so a couple more examples here what is gentleness what is meekness what is it where do we use it so what about the person in sin what about the person that's been sinning right how do we go after them right how do we approach how do we seek to go after the sinning brother in a way that will restore them remember we want to win them back we want to restore them we don't want to chew them out we don't want to go prove that they're sinful we don't want to win an argument we want to win them right so it's essential that we go in gentleness caught trapped stuck in any transgression you who are spiritual should restore him how in a spirit of gentleness there it is spirit of gentleness and keep this in mind keep watch on yourself watch yourself now when you go to the sinning brother don't think you're too high don't think you're better than them watch on yourself lest you too be tempted to you know lord it over them bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of christ for if anyone thinks he is something so don't think you're anything when he's nothing he deceives himself so you know we're going to a sinning brother take the log out of your eye first right recognize you're just a sinner coming to another sinner come in gentleness and what about unbelievers how do we treat unbelievers how does this characteristic help us when we come to those who are unbelieving or those who are slanderers or those that outright reject the lord whatever category they're in here's how peter says right this characteristic of gentleness is so important even if you should suffer for righteousness sake you will be blessed right you believe that you suffer for righteousness you're blessed right no

I lost everybody all right I'll finish up have no fear of them nor be troubled but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy or sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts always being prepared to make a defense so how do we make a defense to anyone who asks you for the reason for the hope that is in you so how do you give the answer to them and you're suffering right context of the suffering you're you're you're you're you're being rejected you're being slandered right you're so give a reason for the hope that is in you yet do it with gentleness do it with mildness do it with softness you're not trying to win an argument you're not trying to prove your worldview is all superior to theirs even if it is because our Christian worldview is the only true worldview but how we teach others how we approach others must be in gentleness and respect not with shame and condemnation having a good conscience so that when you are slandered those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame so you don't shame them you leave it in the hand of God right they slander you we've had that in our church when I was first here the slander that came to us particularly to me leave it alone don't slander back don't fight back let God take care of it thank God that's hard because what do you want to do we did not do that we did not do you know it was hard but so leaving it so that's gentleness that's not a natural response gentleness lets it go lets it go no self defense so what does it look like to walk worthy we find first of all humility or lowliness of mind right a right view of yourself you're not you're not self defense not self reliant not self trusting and more importantly we value others and then gentleness meekness strength under control right unresisting the total opposite of probably our natural response right unresisting overlooking not defending defending

Christ but not defending ourselves so do do you desire to see these characteristics that's the first question do you desire to see they're not they're not going to make you look good to certain people they will look good to other Christians who will recognize that wonderful fruit of the spirit in you that humility and gentleness so God gives grace to the humble so humble yourself make the make the choice right God is convicting you make the choice today to pursue this humility of mind and this gentleness this meekness that the Lord desires in us that was so modeled by him by Jesus himself kind of gets us ahead of God taking us into hard situations that conform us to the image of Christ if we're willing for you see what I'm saying we might get out of some trouble by getting ahead of the Lord that's my goofy thinking about trying to get ahead never mind stop the tape or whatever I was trying to make a point but never mind let's pray Father we thank you thank you Lord for Paul who diligently defines things and has learned from you Father has learned from the word he's learned from you what it means to really walk in a manner worthy to be a servant of [41:31] Christ to be a Christian to be a follower these are the kind of characteristics that are not natural to us so they're ones that we have to look to you to help us we have to rely on you to develop these we have to stop our natural we have to put off the old and put on the new and so help us Lord to renew our mind in these things we ask in Christ's name amen