

Ephesians 4:1-6

The first three chapters deal with our *position* in Christ.

- God calls us *hagios* or *saints*; those that are set-apart for God's use.
- He calls us *faithful in Christ*. (1:1)
- God blesses us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies (1:3)
- He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world. (1:4)
- He makes us to be holy and blameless (1:4)
- He predestinated us (1:5)
- He adopted us (1:5) and made us to the praise and glory of His grace (1:6)
- He has bestowed on us His grace in the sphere of the Beloved (1:6)
- He has given us redemption and forgiveness (1:7) wisdom and prudence (1:8)
- He has revealed to us the first aspect of the mystery, namely that all things would be summed up in Christ (1:10)
- He has given us an inheritance and predestined us to fulfill His purposes in His Son. (1:11).
- He has sealed us with the Holy Spirit of promise (1:13)
- He has given resurrection power to strengthen us (1:19-20)
- He's made us alive from the dead (2:1).
- He's taken us who were alienated and far off, and brought us near by the blood of Christ (2:13-15)
- He's revealed to us another aspect of His great mystery; the truth that Jews and Gentiles would be one (3:3-6)
- And He's made it possible for us to capitalize on all of this by giving us His Holy Spirit who can strengthen the inner man (3:16), so that Christ can settle down and be at home in our hearts (3:17), so that we can be filled with incomprehensible love (3:17), so that we can have eternal fullness (3:19), and so that we can know His power (3:20).

This, in a nutshell, is our position in Christ. In chapters 1 through 3 we are presented with this doctrine that tells us who we are in Christ.

Now we get to chapter 4 where the apostle Paul writes, “*I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called...*”

It is here that the Apostle Paul transitions from the first three chapters to the last three. This is a shift from *position* to *practice*, from *doctrine* to *duty*. It is a movement in Paul’s teaching from *information* to *instruction*.

Duty always flows out of doctrine. One’s practice always flows out of one’s position.

This is even understood in our society today. A physician has a practice. A judge issues verdicts.

If you are going to drive a car, truck or bus in our state, you’re required to get some type of instruction first. MVA exams, both written and on the road are given to ensure that you know how to drive the vehicle for which you are attempting to get the license.

Out of the doctrine comes the duty you get your license and then you are supposed to *drive*. One thing that aggravates many motorists to the core is someone who has a license and a car but doesn't know how to drive.

I believe that what aggravated the Apostle Paul to the core was someone who knew the teachings about life in Christ but didn't live according to those teachings. You see, in the body of Christ, Christian living, the *duty*, must flow from principals of Christian *doctrine*.

Thus Paul begins chapter four with the word, *therefore*. In our text, the word *therefore* is a transitional word. We have already seen in our study of Ephesians that if you see the word *therefore* in the Scriptures, you must find out "what it's there for."

What Paul is saying here is that, "On the basis of all this doctrine, *therefore*, this is your duty." In other words, Paul is saying that:

- *because positionally you're a saint* (which means a "set-apart one")
- *because positionally you are faithful,*
- *because God has chosen, predestined, adopted, redeemed, forgiven and sealed you...*

Because all this is true of you, "*I entreat you, I beseech you, I beg of you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called.*"

Duty without doctrine...

I remember in school having to take a subject called Trigonometry. In Trig I learned the sine, cosine and tangent functions. I learned that I could calculate the sine of an angle by dividing the length of the opposite side from the angle by the hypotenuse.

I had to commit to memory that I could calculate the cosine of an angle by dividing the length of the side adjacent to the angle by the hypotenuse and the tangent of an angle by dividing the length of the side opposite the angle by the length of the side adjacent to the angle.

What my math teacher didn't tell me was how I would be using¹ all this gobbledygook. One day I was working on a project around the house of the church and I needed to know how long something needed to be. I knew the high point and I knew the distance from the base. But what I didn't know was the distance from the high point to the point measured from the base. I had an "Ah Ha!" moment.

I could employ the Pythagorean Theorem states that the square of the hypotenuse equals the square of the other two sides of a triangle. In other words, $c^2 = a^2 + b^2$.

Now I knew *how to use* all the information I had been taught in school. This is Paul's goal in chapters 4 through 6—he now begins to teach his readers how to apply the teaching he's laid out in chapters 1 to 3.

The problem in the church is that people are being told *what* to do, that is, the *duty* but not being taught the *doctrine* from which the duty flows.

¹ <http://www.milearn.com/fileup/Practical%20Trigonometry%20Math%20from%20MiLearn.pdf>

For example, most people don't decide to drive 55 miles an hour on the Baltimore beltway because it's a good idea. They do it because there is a "doctrine" that says they must drive 55 mph. Their duty is predicated on that doctrine.

You just don't send a check to the electric utility every month at a whim. You do so because there is a doctrine that says that you must do it or you will be using candles.

MacArthur says, "This is the way it is in the Christian life. People don't arbitrarily do things. Unless they know the reason, or the *doctrine*, you have a hard time getting them to make a commitment to the duty. Pastors and teachers must teach doctrine or they will be nothing more than cheerleaders with a group of people committed to doing things without the faintest idea why they are doing them."

The problem in many of our churches where there has been great commitment and then the commitment wanes over time is that the people were committed to the pastor, each other, or the church but not the Word of God.

You ask these people "Why do they do what they do?" or "Why are you so committed?" and they will tell you that, "I love the Lord" or "I love the brethren" or "I love my church" but when the storms come they fall away.

What eventually happens is that people in these churches get angry with the pastor or another church member—they might get disillusioned with the direction or vision of the church and then they leave.

In Ephesians the Holy Spirit doesn't begin teaching us our duty. He begins with teaching us our position in Christ and then out of that position flows the practice—out of that doctrine flows the duty.

It is important to be committed to one another and committed to the mission and vision of the church and committed to our spiritual leaders. But it is far more important to be committed to the Word of God from which the instructions for these commitments originate.

I can say that I am committed to my wife and my children but if I am not committed to the Scripture that teaches these commitments as commands, my commitment will fall short at some point.

A commitment to the Word of God...

The successful, God honoring church is one where its member's are bound to the Word of God. Yes, there needs to be a commitment to follow the leadership of the church but true, lasting, life changing duty proceeds from doctrine, not from allegiance to a man or a church.

That is why Paul wrote, "*I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called...*"

Paul could have just said, "I beg of you to walk worthy..." This is what some pastors and saying---"Walk right; live right; act right; talk right!" But what they are not doing is teaching their congregations about the calling and the vocation of the believer.

In chapters 1 to 3 Paul is saying, "This is who you are in Christ!" And, in chapters 4-6 he says, "Walk like it!"

Entreat/Beseech

What does this word ***entreat or beseech*** (KJV) mean? "Entreat or beseech" is ***parakaleo***, that means, "to call to one's side." It is an appeal. Paul is getting up in your face saying, "*I beg of you, please*". It is the same word that is used in Romans 12:1.

Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest says that Paul could have used his apostolic authority to command his readers but instead, he pleads.

Pastor J. Vernon Magee says that it is not the command of Sinai "with fire and thunder"; it is the gentle wooing of love that Paul makes his request.

Paul was a passionate man with tears running down his face during most of his ministry as he pleads, begs, and cries for people to respond. Here in Ephesians 4:1 Paul is begging the believers at Ephesus to walk worthy of their calling in Christ.

Why does he beg them? Because until you walk worthy, God is not glorified in your life, you are not fully blessed, the church cannot fully function, and the world, therefore, cannot see Jesus Christ.

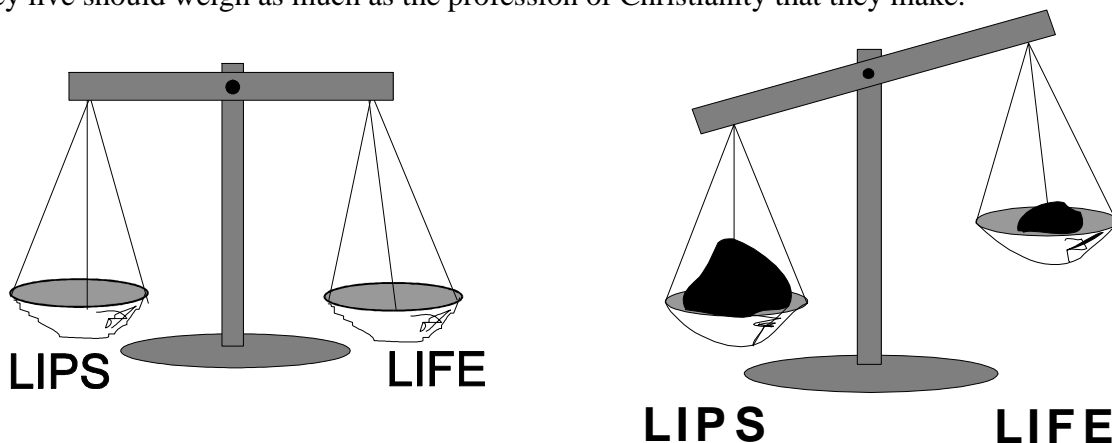
*I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to **walk** in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called...*

Walk

When Paul uses the word ***walk (peripateo)*** he means "to walk about," thus, "to conduct one's self," "to order one's behavior."

The phrase "***in a manner worthy***" is the Greek word ***axios***, an adverb, "having the weight of or weighing as much as another thing."

Therefore the apostle Paul is exhorting believers to see to it that their Christian experience, the Christian life they live should weigh as much as the profession of Christianity that they make.



In other words, they were to practice what they preach—their life experiences were to measure up to what God has said they are.

When you say "I'm a Christian" that really says a lot!

The story is told about a man who claimed that he "got religion." An old college buddy who knew about his disorderly past heard the news, called him on the phone, and said, "Joe, they tell me you've got religion." "I sure have", Joe replied..

His friend responded, "Then I suppose you'll be going to church every Sunday." "That's right," said Joe, "I started 5 weeks ago and haven't missed a service since." His friend inquired, "And I suppose you're going to quit smoking and drinking."

"Already have," Joe replied. "In fact, I haven't smoked a cigarette or touched a drop of liquor since." His friend paused for a moment.

Finally, remembering how much money Joe owed him, he said with an intended jab, "I suppose too, now that you've got religion, you're going to square up with all those people you owe money to."

At that point Joe exploded and said, "Now wait a minute! That's not religion you're talking about; that's business!"

There problem is that many of us are like Joe, our practice goes only so far when it comes to matching up our talk with our walk. How is your walk? Do we having anyone like Joe in the house?

Paul wrote to the Philippians saying, "*Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.*" (Phil 1:27)

Paul was concerned about the reputation of those in the body of Christ. You see, people are drawn to Christ or repelled from Him by our walk—by how we live.

The apostle Peter does some begging of his own as he writes, "*Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the pagans, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.* (1 Peter 2:11-12)

A preacher was once asked how many active members he had in his church. He replied, "They all are active! Some are active for the Lord and the rest are active for the devil."

Paul goes on to describe the worthy walk

With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love...(Eph 4:2)

These are the five characteristics of the worthy walk. They all fit together, yet they are all different.

In verse two there also seems to be a progression: Where there is "all lowliness" there will be "meekness"; then comes "long-suffering," which results in "forbearing love"; with the end result of "unity".

Let's look at each of these characteristics of the Christian's walk in Christ.

With all lowliness

1.) *all lowliness* - ***tapeinophrosune***, tap-i-nof-ros-oo'-nay. This refers to humiliation of mind, in other words, a modesty, a humbleness of mind. Paul writes, “all possible lowliness” or “every kind of lowliness,” -

Lowliness according to the Bible is not just mere modesty or a belittling of ourselves. When we make ourselves small—that’s pride in the disguise of humility. Lowliness, is the *recognition* that we are nothing except for the grace of God—it is esteeming ourselves small and the recognition of ourselves and our agendas as less important than another’s.

Philippians 2:3-5 says, “*Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus...*”

The story is told of a group of people who went to see Beethoven’s home in Germany. After the tour guide showed them Beethoven’s piano and finished his lecture he asked if any of them would like to come up and sit at the piano for a moment and play a chord or two.

There was a sudden rush to the piano by all the people except for a gray-haired gentleman with long flowing hair. The guide finally asked him, “Wouldn’t you like to sit down at Beethoven’s piano and play a few notes?”. He answered, “No, I don’t feel worthy.” That man was Paderewski, the only man who was really worthy to play the piano of Beethoven.

Expositors Bible Commentary defines humility as, “the lowliness of mind which springs from a true estimate of ourselves -- a deep sense of our own moral smallness and demerit.”

It is used several times in the New Testament.

The apostle Paul knowing that once he went to Jerusalem he may be killed, called for the elders of the church in Ephesus and poured out his heart to them.

*Acts 20:17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.
Acts 20:18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,
Acts 20:19 Serving the Lord with all **humility of mind**, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:*

Paul describes humility as a prerequisite of God’s grace for the believer, particularly for those who would serve in leadership.

*1 Peter 5:5 Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with **humility**, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the **humble**."*

Charles Spurgeon once said, “The higher a man is in grace, the lower he will be in his own estimation. Not because he is comparing himself with people, but because he is comparing himself with the Lord God.”

The opposite of humility is pride.

The Bible teaches that there are six things that the Lord God hates; seven are an abomination unto him:

Guess what is at the top of the list?

*Proverbs 6:16-17 - These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A **proud look**, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,*

Pride can bring injury and destroy

Proverbs 16:18 Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

Someone has said that confidence is that quiet, absolutely assured feeling you have just before you fall flat on your face.

Pride is a vice that will be prevalent in the last days.

2 Timothy 3:4 lets us know that in the last days men and women will be, “*Traitors, heady, **highminded**, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God...*”

The word “highminded” in 2 Timothy 3 means “to envelop with smoke.” It emphasizes the plight of the one who has been blinded by personal pride. It also means “to inflate with self-conceit.”

Some years ago there was a commercial that depicted an arrogant, pride-filled trend taking place in our society. In a commercial advertising a learning center, a mother tells how her son had difficulty in school and how the school had given him a sense of self-worth.

The school helped this little boy to learn to read and as a result, his grades improved. The end of the commercial shows the boy, somewhere between the ages of six and eight, smiling and declaring “*I’m the best*”.

Pastor Adrian Rogers tells the story of a man who walked into a friend's home, bleeding, covered with black and blue bruises all over his body. His startled friend exclaimed, "What in the world happened to you?"

The wounded friend answered, "Well, I was walking down the street and was accosted by two thugs who told me to give them all of my money. But, I didn't want to give them my money so I fought them and fought them and fought them!"

His friend then asked, "Well, just how much money did you have?" The answer he received shocked him, "35 Cents." His friend exclaimed, "What! You fought for just 35 Cents?" "That's right," the wounded man answered. "I didn't want to disclose my financial situation."

Pride was the root cause of Satan’s fall:

Isa 14:12 How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

Isa 14:13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

Isa 14:14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

Back in Ephesians we are taught that *humility/lowliness* is essential in order to walk worthy of our calling.

Gentleness / meekness.

With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love...(Eph 4:2)

The Greek word translated *gentleness/meekness* also speaks of non-retaliation-- traits that in our proud society are often equated with weakness or cowardice. But in reality they are virtues that identify Kingdom citizens.

The same word was used by the Greeks to describe a gentle breeze, a soothing medicine, or a domesticated colt. Those are examples of power under control.

- A gentle breeze brings pleasure, but a hurricane brings destruction
- A soothing medicine brings healing, but an overdose can kill
- A domesticated colt is useful, but a wild horse is dangerous.

As with the characteristic of lowliness, Jesus was the personification of it. So He is when it comes to meekness.

Jesus was known for being concerned about children.

And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. (Mark 10:13-14)

Jesus was concerned about those who were overcome by the pressures and anxieties of the world:

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. (Mat 11:28-30)

Yet when he saw His Father's house being desecrated, He in righteous indignation made a whip and beat those who were defiling it. (John 2:13-16)

Peter describes Jesus to a church under heavy persecution as one who was meek.

1 Peter 2:20-24 – “For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed (entrusted) himself to him that judges righteously...:

This is the same Jesus whose glorious presence caused the Apostle Paul to become blind on the Damascus Road. It was the same Jesus the Apostle John described in Revelation 1:10. John says, "When I saw him I fell at His feet as dead." (Rev. 1:17)

Meekness is "power under control" and in 1 Peter 2, the apostle offers Jesus as an example of "power under control" to four groups: (1) Citizens (2:11-17), (2) Servants (2:18-20), (3) Wives (3:1-6) and (4) Husbands (3:7). The common bond with each of these groups is that they were experiencing suffering in their lives.

1 Pet 2:20 For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.

1 Pet 2:21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:

1 Pet 2:22 "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth";

1 Pet 2:23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;

1 Pet 2:24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness; by whose stripes you were healed.

Peter tells these believers to be meek like Jesus keep His power at bay because He trusted in His Father.

1. Citizens Don't riot, rebel, or cheat on taxes...entrust your situation to God!
2. Employees Don't strike, reduce production, or call in "sick" when you not... trust God!
3. Wives Don't punish your husband with your "headaches" or disrespect him... trust God!
4. Husbands Don't beat your wife, be bitter towards her and run the street... trust God!

Meekness is strength under control. When you've got the power and advantage, God says to keep that power at bay and be meek and gentle.

Longsuffering / Patience

Paul goes on in our text in verse 2 and writes, "With all lowliness and meekness, ***with longsuffering***, forbearing one another in love."

Longsuffering (patience -NASB) ***makrothumia*** - found to express patience with respect to people. Another Greek word for *patience* is ***hupomene***, which means patience with respect to things.

A young man, a Christian, went to an older believer to ask for prayer. "Will you please pray that I may be more patient?" he asked. The aged saint agreed. They knelt together and the man began to pray, "Lord, send this young man tribulation in the morning; send this young man tribulation in the afternoon; send this young man-

At that point the young Christian blurted out, "No, no, I didn't ask you to pray for tribulation. I wanted you to pray for patience." "Ah," responded the wise Christian, "it's through tribulation that we learn patience."

The man who's longsuffering or patient when it comes to *people* is one who deals with caustic or abrasive folk but does not permit himself to be easily provoked by them.

The man who is longsuffering or patient when it comes to the *circumstances of life* is the one who under a great flood of trials, bears up and does not lose courage.

It is said that the person who is *longsuffering*, has a *long temper*.

Forbearing in love...

Paul writes in verse two of our text, "*forbearing one another in love...*" This word (*anecho*) has to do with holding up, sustaining and enduring. Paul is using this word to explain what he means by the word *longsuffering*.

J. Vernon McGee says that "forbearing one another in love" means to hold one's self back in the spirit of love.

There are going to be times in your life when you are tempted to get even with someone one who has hurt you. There are going to be times in your life when you want to give someone a piece of your mind or worse.

It is at those times when, as a Christian, you will have to obey the Word of God and *forbear*—hold back—endure!

Col 3:13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

...in love

Love is the only arena in which true longsuffering will take place. This is the love of the Holy Spirit that is shed abroad in our hearts. If we have been redeemed (Ephesians 1:7) then as God has been patient with you, you need to show patience to others.

Psa 86:15 But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.

These are four characteristics of the one who obeys the command to walk worthy (vs. 1):

1. all lowliness
2. meekness
3. longsuffering
4. forbearing love

They all fit together, yet they are all distinct. Also there seems to be a flow from one characteristic to another: Where there is "all lowliness" there will be "meekness"; then come "long-suffering," which results in "forbearing love"; with the end result: the fifth characteristic of "unity" of which we will talk about next time.

In Ephesians 4:3 Paul writes, "*endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*"

The saving work of Jesus Christ as described in chapters 1 to 3 of Ephesians makes its mark on a person. If you are a recipient of the grace of God's forgiveness you are a changed person. It is these changes that we will be discussing over the next several weeks.