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## EPHESIANS 4:1-6

### Ephesians: Recognizing Who You Are in Christ

Open your Bibles to Ephesians 4. Ephesians 4 takes us into the second half of the book. The first half was Ephesians 1-3; the second half is Ephesians 4-6. That all makes sense numerically, but the subject matter changes as well.

In the first three chapters we're talking about who we are in Christ. The word 'riches' is used six times in the first three chapters. We talk about what God has done for us. You remember in chapter 1 how He picked us out, how He adopted us into His family, how we're blessed in so many cool ways. All of that is what God has done for us and who we are in Christ. That's all about chapters 1-3 and when you get done with chapters 1-3 you should be saying, "Wow. There's a lot of stuff there. Wow. God has done a lot for me."

But when you get to chapter 4 we make a switch, as Paul does in some of his other writings too, so that now we move into the practical part. In other words, how are we going to apply this in our lives? So in chapter 4 we're going to move into another part of the book and it's going to tell us how to put these things into practice.

In Ephesians 4:1 it says this: *As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.* So do you see, it's *live a life*; we're talking about the practical side. In other words, because we've already talked about all these things, now we're going to put it into practice. I'm going to show you what to do given the fact that all these things have been the case.

Do you see there it says, *I urge you to live a life worthy*? That word *live a life worthy* in the original is the word 'walk.' Let me show you in the King James Version. In the King James Version it says, *I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation with which you were called.* So something happens here in this passage where now Paul is switching and he's saying, "Now I'm going to tell you how to walk in your Christian life. I'm going to tell you what that looks like."

The word 'walk' is going to be used five times between now and the end of the book of Ephesians in chapters 4-6. It really has to do with this idea of conduct yourselves. How does a Christian live differently because he has this calling? How does a Christian live differently than someone else might live? Would people know by your conduct, by the way that you live that you are a Christian? They ought to be able to tell by the way that you live that you have different values, that your heart is somewhere else, and that you love the Lord.

Let me show you where the word ‘walk’ is used in the rest of the book here in Ephesians 4-6. We’re in Ephesians 4 right now, 4:1, and we’re talking about speaking of walking in unity. In chapter 4 verse 17 he’s going to tell us *don’t walk as the Gentiles walk*. In chapter 5 verse 2 it says we are to *walk in love*. Ephesians 5:8 commands us to *walk as children of light*. Ephesians 5:15 says, *walk wisely*.

The word ‘walk’ has to do with your behavior. The question we have to ask ourselves is does our behavior match our beliefs? That’s really what he’s saying here. Does our walk match our words? God doesn’t just fill our heads with information so we can be smart Christians. What He wants us to do is to be able to put those things into practice in our lives.

Paul could’ve used a number of words for this motion of moving forward. He could’ve used run or jog or leap or swim, but he chooses walk, which implies some kind of progress, some kind of mission, some kind of a goal. And so our walk ought to include that sense, that people can see by who we are that we’re different. We’re not just like everybody else.

When I was younger I had a mentor who said, “If you want to look like the leader or the person in charge, then carry a clipboard and walk fast.” I don’t know if that’s true or not, but the statement reveals this idea that a leader walks differently than the people who are just followers. It’s worth considering.

Just think about walking. If you’re going in the park and you’re watching people walk there’s some people that are speed walking. They’re moving their hips back and forth and they’re walking and you know they’re on a mission. You can tell what they’re doing just by the way that they walk. Compare that kind of walking to the person who has his camera out, shooting pictures, looking at flowers, smelling them; he’s walking a whole different way. A tourist looking at the sights.

What does your walk look like? If people looked at your walk (when I say “your walk” I mean the way you conduct yourselves in life) what would they say about you? Would you say, “He’s an angry person.” Would they say, “He’s a serious person.”

I think people think of me being a serious person. This week I posted something that I thought was kind of fun on Facebook. It was funny, but also fun, interesting. I posted it on a number of my sites, on the National Center for Biblical Parenting homepage, and I tweeted it. I use HootSuite, so it just went out to a whole bunch of places. I thought it was kind of a funny thing, interesting thing.

The first comment on Facebook was, “Your site has been hacked.” That’s what they said because “this is so uncharacteristic of Scott Turansky to be funny. Your site must’ve been hacked.” I laughed; I couldn’t believe it! I thought, “I better lighten up here,” because they have the wrong perspective. Nancy was on there with me and we were laughing about this.

It’s just funny to see how our walk, the way we live gives people impressions about us. I don’t want to be known as the serious guy all the time. I have a lot of fun. I enjoy life. But apparently I give off those vibes that I’m a really serious guy, so people get that impression.

Notice it says that the most important thing that we want to do is walk a walk that is *worthy of the calling* that we have. We want people to see. When they look at us will they see that we're Christians?

I usually take the Bible verse by verse. Today we're going to go word by word because this is so good. There's so much stuff in this one verse, so word by word here.

Notice it starts *I urge you*. The idea that Paul is saying here is, "I'm begging you. I'm pleading with you." He says, *I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling*. Or I beseech you that you walk worthy. That's what he's saying.

Here's the fun thing about this word that I discovered this week. The word 'beseech' or 'urge' is the Greek word *parakaleo*. 'To call alongside to help' is the idea. "I'm urging you guys. Come on and do this."

The interesting thing about it is that Jesus uses the same word in its noun form to describe the Holy Spirit when He says the Holy Spirit's going to come. He says, *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth*. That's John 14:16. The word 'advocate' in the New International Version is the same word *parakletos*. It's the noun form of this 'come alongside to help.' In the King James Version in John 14:16 he calls it the *Comforter*.

The idea here is that Paul is saying, "I urge you." I urge you in the sense that I'm coming alongside to help. God says, "I've sent to you a Comforter that will help you" in all of the things that we're describing here and what's going to happen.

The reason I like that is because I think some people have a picture of God that when He says, "Walk," He's like the policeman that says, "Stay off the grass. Stay in the crosswalk." People are looking at God in this way that He's like the policeman. But I don't think that's the right way to look at God. Although God is a judge, God is interested in holiness and righteousness (we don't want to minimize that).

We also want to see that Jesus says, "I'm going to send you a Comforter. I come to send you someone who's going to come along and He's going to coach you along in life. He's going to help you deal with the things that you need to deal with." You can get a life coach today to help you with your finances, you can get a life coach to help you with your eating, your exercise, to get organized. You can get a life coach for anything you want today. The interesting thing is Jesus is saying, "I've got a life coach for you, the Holy Spirit, who's going to come and live inside you and He's going to coach you along saying, 'You're starting to get off the path there. Stay on the right place.'" He's the one who's going to urge us. He's the one who's going to do that work to be the life coach in our lives.

I really like that picture of God, that He's helping me walk the walk. He's helping me every day with those promptings that say, "Stay on the path here. Be careful of that." He's guiding us along the way in order to help us. So this idea of *I urge you*, I think, is a significant word.

Let's go to the next word there. To walk or *live a life worthy*. Worthy. What does that word *worthy* mean?

The idea of *walk worthy* is mentioned three times in the Bible, so this isn't foreign to Paul. He uses it in two other places. One we already talked about here in Ephesians 4:1 where it says *walk worthy*. The second one is in Colossians 1:10 where it says that *you might walk worthy in the Lord*. And then the last one is found in 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12: *For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God*. Worthy. Live a life that's worthy of God.

Let's go back to Ephesians because I want you to see where the word 'walk' is used in the first three chapters of Ephesians and I'll bring you some conclusions here that I think will be helpful as we try to apply it.

In Ephesians 2:1-2 it says, *And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein a time past you walked according to the course of this world*. There is a way that we walk that's different than following the Lord. "You can walk the way of the world," he's saying, "but I'm telling you there's another way to walk." That's what he's describing here. He's telling us we want to walk in a worthy way.

Where are we going? How are we living? Are we walking in a way that demonstrates the glory and majesty of the Lord? And do people see that? I think that's what Paul is encouraging us here. We're walking in a way that demonstrates God's glory, demonstrates His righteousness. We're different people. We're not like everybody else going the same way. We're going a different way because we're following the Lord, and that often means that we're not doing what other people are doing. We're following God.

I like the motivation here. It isn't a motivation that says, "Oh! You're in trouble now! Get back on the path." No, it's not that. That's not what Paul is using as a motivation. What he's saying is, "Rise to the level here of the calling that you have. Let me call you to something better." I really like that visioning approach that Paul uses here. Let your walk be like your calling.

He uses this word 'worthy.' It's the Greek word *axios*, which has an interesting word picture to it because it was used in the weighing of things. Let's say that in the early first century you were wanting to buy some flour. You went to the grain at the mill and they made the flour for you. You wanted a certain weight. I don't know how they weighed things back then, but let's say they would put it on the scale, this much weight, and then they'd have the bag here opened up. They'd start putting in the flour until the flour approached the weight level and then it would switch and then they would say, "*Axios*. It's done." In other words, you've met the standard. It's worthy. That's the picture that's being used here.

When we measure our walk does it meet the calling that we have? Are we being the kind of people that God wants us to be? That's what he's saying here.

I think we tend to make excuses for ourselves and we start saying, “Well, I grew up in a dysfunctional family. I have a really hard time with that.” Or “you wouldn’t believe all the pressures I have in my life. Man, all these kinds of things happen to me and I don’t think I could...” We are called to rise above the circumstances. In the muck and the fertilizer of life we’re the ones that are blooming because God is calling us to rise above, to walk worthy of the calling that we have. It’s very easy, in those situations when all the other stuff’s going on, to get sucked in with everybody else and to start acting like other people act.

I told you that there are other books of the Bible that Paul wrote where he switches to the practical side. Let me show you in the book of Romans where he does the same thing.

Romans 1-11 are all theology, helping us understand salvation, what it is, and so on. But chapter 12 makes the switch. A very similar switch as we see in Ephesians. Notice even some of the words are the same. Look at what he says. *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.* Let’s apply this to our lives, he’s saying.

But notice the next words because what Paul is saying in Ephesians is let’s let our walk rise above the others. Let’s walk worthy of the calling that we have; not be influenced by those things around us.

Paul says the same thing in verse 2 of Romans 12. *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world* (that is, don’t let the world squeeze you into its mold), *but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

You get the idea here. Paul is telling us that our walk, the way we live every day, the ins and outs of our lives, need to rise to the level so they’re worthy of the calling that God has given to us.

Let’s talk about calling for a minute. What are you talking about when we look at calling? Because God has called us, first of all, to become Christians, to accept Jesus Christ into our lives. But He doesn’t stop there. See, when salvation takes place, we all must bow at the cross the same way. If there’s a door there, we all have to go through the same door. You do, I do; it’s always the same. We go through the same door. We must bow before God in humility and ask Jesus Christ to come into our lives. After we pass through that door, between that door and heaven the branches kind of move out because once you’re a Christian God has a calling for you that may be different than somebody else. So our paths diverge a little bit, all going toward heaven, all going in the right direction, but we’re called in different ways.

Some people are called to be a businessman working in New York City. Someone else may be called to be working at home. Somebody else may be called to be working in the neighborhood. Other people are called to do all kinds of things, but we all, as we’re called to do those things, are called to follow the Lord toward heaven. Occasionally the Lord allows our paths to merge a little bit like He did this morning when we all come together for a little bit and then our paths will separate again for the rest of the week. We’ll cross a little bit on Facebook during the week or other places, but we’re all heading in that direction.

We have a calling. Your calling may be a little bit different than mine, but either way it all involves the word of God and His grace in our lives. That's what he's saying. He's saying, "Bring your life and your practice up to the level of the calling God has for you."

He's going to talk specifically in the rest of the book about some of the specifics. For example, if we go to the end of Ephesians 4 he's going to apply to emotions, particularly anger. He's going to talk about how we are called to be compassionate and forgiving as opposed to bitterness, rage, malice, and all those other things. So he's going to talk about applying it there. Then when we get into chapter 5 he's going to talk about family relationships, husbands and wives. Then in chapter 6 he's going to talk about applying to the calling of children, parents. He's going to talk about slaves and masters. We're going to take that idea and apply it to employee-employer relationships when we get there.

What he's doing is he's saying we all have these different individual callings, but we all have a responsibility to follow the Lord. So whatever you're doing, wherever you are, you want to be trusting the Lord and working in some specific ways to follow Him. If you see in verse 1 it says, *As a prisoner for the Lord, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling that you have received. Worthy of that calling.*

Before we get into the specifics later on in the book, we're going to talk about some general things that we all need and that's where verse 2 picks it up. We need verse 2 so that we can understand it. Let me read it. Verses 2 and 3: *Be completely humble and gentle. These are characteristics of being godly or following the Lord or rising to your calling. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*

We've got several words there, but all of the words have this one thing in common. It seems to me all of these words talk about being softhearted. We don't have in this passage, although we have it in other places, where Paul is saying "be bold, be courageous, be strong in your faith. Take a stand for righteousness." That's not what he's emphasizing here. He's emphasizing the soft-heartedness.

Let's allow God to influence us in that way this morning about the softhearted part of the gospel. Are we living that? When people look at us do they see those kinds of things? Do they see that the cross is greater than me?

Humility. Let's start with that one. The idea of humility is that we can't do anything without the Lord. I talked to a young man this week and he told me, "I'm not quite sure how to handle this. I know I'm really good at what I do, but I don't want to appear to be arrogant when I talk about that with other people. I talk about a lot of things and have to. But I don't want to appear to be arrogant." He's wrestling with this idea of humility. What does it look like? What does it mean to be humble?

I once saw a definition of humility that says this: “recognizing that my success is a result of God and others working in my life.” I like that. I’m not just taking all the credit and saying, “Look at how good I am.” Alcoholics Anonymous defines humility as recognizing our deficiencies.

I think humility is one of those things we need to be continually striving for. It’s when we become proud that we end up thinking we’re stronger than we fall. We have to be recognizing our weaknesses, recognizing that it’s only by God’s grace that we have anything that we have and that we’re moving forward.

That means in practical relationships we don’t jump to conclusions about someone else. Sometimes we let other people speak first. We listen to them. Humility means that we’re thinking about other people. If you have authority, whether it’s authority in the home or authority in the workplace, you don’t misuse that authority, but rather use the authority to empower others.

What is humility? Here’s another statement about humility. “When you’re wrong, admit it, and when you’re right, shut up.” That’s a pretty good definition of humility. I think it’s acknowledging the strengths that others have. Paul is saying, “Rise to your calling.” One of those things you want to do is be humble.

He also says and be *gentle*. The word ‘gentle’ is the word *protais*. It’s the word that’s used in the Sermon on the Mount. *Blessed are the meek*. It’s also the word that’s used in the fruit of the Spirit as he’s listing all the parts of the fruit of the Spirit. Instead of letting somebody have it, you pause a little bit. You’re a little bit more gentle.

Does gentleness characterize us? What is gentleness? I was trying to think, is gentleness weakness? When it says in the Bible *blessed are the meek* I kind of think of wilted guys, kind of weak. But gentleness is something different than that. It seems to me that weakness can look like gentleness. They can look the same. Weakness and gentleness may look the same, but gentleness is different because gentleness embodies some kind of strength. I have the strength to do something, but I restrain myself and I’m gentle in the process.

I think we often have strength and that strength that we have we sometimes use to overpower someone. That’s why I think Proverbs 15:1 says that *a gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger*. Gentleness means that you realize that you have the potential to cause damage, but instead you choose not to. You choose to be careful with life, with you, and with those around you. You choose, instead, to pause.

I like that. There’s this idea of gentleness is not something that’s a sign of weakness, it’s actually a sign of strength inside because of the self-restraint necessary to harness the strength we have so it doesn’t damage someone else. Gentleness.

Notice the next word in the phrase as we’re going word by word here. He talks about patience. *Patience and bearing with one another*. He uses both of those. I think we need to be patient with people; we also need to be patient with circumstances.

Patience isn't just composure. That's not what we're talking about. It's always composure under pressure. You can't have patience unless you have some annoying, irritating something (or someone) nearby requiring you to practice that composure under pressure. Can you do that? Can you be patient with someone when they're being annoying or irritating? That's what patience is. Patience isn't the ability just to wait. It's the ability to have a good attitude while you're waiting.

Wow. Those are some cool things to rise above. Our walk is imitating this calling that God has given to us.

Then he says in verse 3, see in the passage there, *make every effort*. The idea is go out of your way or exert yourself. *Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*

I looked up that word *make every effort* and it is the word diligence. Diligence is this idea of hanging in there, of doing a good job, working hard at it. That's the word. Diligence. It's the same word used in 2 Timothy 2:15. *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. Be diligent, hang in there, do what needs to be done with care and concentration and single-pointed attention. Diligent. So he's saying exert yourself in a particular way.*

You're going to make every effort, it describes, to do what? Notice it says there *make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace*. This emphasis is on the unity. Do your best to do what? *To keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*

This *bond of peace* is I don't think an easy thing to accomplish a lot of times because problems get in the way and those problems generate conflict. And so peace is elusive. He's saying, "Work at it. Make every effort to be at peace with someone else." Can we do that? Can we be at peace with others even when other people are obnoxious or you don't like what they do? It's hard.

Peace. The calm quietness that we share when things are good. Here we're not talking so much about internal peace. We're talking about peace in relationships. We can talk about internal peace in other passages, but here it's talking about the peace that happens in relationships.

I like what Romans 12:18 says. *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.* In other words, go out there and give it your best shot. Be diligent. Work at it. Give every effort, as Ephesians 4:3 is saying, so that you can make that happen, and then peace is going to result.

What is the point in being diligent in all of this? When we have humility and gentleness and patience then peace fits in there somehow. We're being diligent in trying to work to gain that peace in relationships.

One of the things that hinders our ability to have peace is the differences that happen in relationships. We're mainly talking about relationships here in this passage, the differences that take place because you're different than somebody else. The differences cause conflict oftentimes. We don't like what the other person is doing, we don't like the way they do it, and so there creates this difference.



We have to work to overcome those things. And how do we do that? The next verses emphasize seven things that we have in common. I think that what Paul is saying here is that if you want to emphasize unity, you're going to make every effort to establish this unity. You're going to emphasize the things you have in common.

Here are seven of them starting in verse 4. Particularly these are spiritual things because when God is working in our lives and God is working in the other person's life, if we can transcend the differences to the spiritual plane, then we can accomplish this unity. It's all the more reason why in a home we want to be praying together, we want to be talking about what the Lord is doing. When the individuals in a home are committed to the Lord then God allows us to transcend some of the problems we experience and achieve some of that unity that we have through these things.

*There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.* So the emphasis is on this unity. Emphasizing these things that we have in common.

There's *one body*. A body has different systems. It has the digestive system and it has the circulatory system. If you're a part of the circulatory system you might feel like the digestive system is getting in the way. It's a problem. There's a sense of "that's not a part of my system." He's saying, "Let's look beyond the systems; let's go to the body." We are all part of the same body. When we start thinking that way it starts to change the way we think of the other person.

He also says *one Lord*. The idea is that we follow the directions from one boss. The boss knows who all of the people are. Those people that are working for him are those people who are submitting to the boss. The boss knows, "You're good at this, you do that. You're good at this, you do that." And so the differences then blend into the whole because they're following the boss. That's what lord means. *One Lord*. We follow the directions of the boss.

You can go through each one of those words that describes the sense of unity that we can have with others because we're emphasizing the spiritual component of all of these relationships. *Make every effort*, be diligent at going after this *unity* that comes *through the bond of peace*.

Now I'm going to go back. That's all we're doing today. We're just taking these six verses because we're using them as a report card to measure our walk. Is our walk rising to the level of our calling that God has given us? Is it doing that? If it is, great. But I think this is something we can all benefit from. This isn't something where some people have arrived and some people haven't. None of us have arrived. We're all trying to move our walk closer to our calling. I'm going to read the verses again and allow the Lord to speak to you as I do.

Starting in verse 1. *As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

There's something about our relationship with God that allows us to move above the circumstances. If you have trouble walking physically, you would get physical therapy in order to be able to walk. But here what we're learning about is a spiritual walk and if we want to do well in our spiritual walk we need spiritual therapy. That's why the Holy Spirit comes and empowers us to be able to do that.

If you wanted to go to a support group for walking physically, you know you're all working together to walk. Walking spiritually, you come together in a support group. The church is kind of like that sometimes, a support group, where we're all contributing to each other and encouraging each other in the areas of our walk. God designed us to be in that kind of a relationship on a regular basis. It comes from something that God wants to do in us.

If you're here today and you've never accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, I want you to know that God is calling you to do that. That is the first part of your calling. God is calling you out. In fact, the word in the New Testament is the word *ecclesia* which means 'the called out ones.' The ones who are called out from the world. That's what the church is. We are called out to be something different, to act differently, to live differently, to walk differently. So if you've never asked Jesus Christ to come into your life, that is the first part of your calling. Then Christ comes to live inside you and then He empowers you to walk the walk that matches this calling.

But this isn't just a message for people who are not yet believers, this is a message for anyone who wants to grow in their faith. All of us as Christians want to make our walk, the things that we do rise to the level of the calling that God has given to us. We do it together. We encourage each other.

If you see me walking in a way that is not godly, I hope you'll tell me and say, "You know, Scott, I think you might want to do this a little bit better." Don't be a policeman to me and say, "Hey! Stop walking out of the crosswalk." Let's just encourage each other with love as it talks about here. Because we want to serve the Lord. We want together for our calling to be the standard and we're raising our walk to be living according to that calling.

I want to do that. I trust that you want to do that too. That's why we're all here trying to grow in the Lord and come and learn from His word on a regular basis. Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, I thank you for the privilege that we have to serve you. I just am grateful for your word. It's such a simple message today, a message about walking and conducting ourselves according to your plan and your calling for us. Lord, we ask that you would give us that grace to do that. I know that that becomes hard in some areas of our lives where we have patterns of reacting; we're drawn to certain things when we're anxious or when we're angry, things that may not be the best for us. But we know, Lord, that you have a calling for us. You want us to rise to that calling, to live a life worthy of that calling you've given to us. So, Lord, we do that today. We ask you to overwhelm us with your love and with your grace. Give us a vision and a power that says, "Yes, you can do it. You can walk this way today." Lord, give us that encouraging word today. We ask in Jesus' name, amen.

Let's continue to worship the Lord together.