



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Walking the Walk

WHO AM I?

Ephesians 4:1–16

Tim Badal | March 5, 2023

Open your Bibles to the book of Ephesians. We're going to be in Ephesians 4. We're at the 50-yard line in our series we've entitled "Who Am I?" We're looking at this New Testament book, this letter written to the church at Ephesus. They were a group of first-century believers who needed to know the answer to the question: who am I?



In the first three chapters, the first half of the book, we have been taught over and over again about our position and the great privileges we have as followers of Jesus Christ. We've been told that although we were sinners and far from God, that in His infinite grace and mercy, He showers us with the forgiveness we need through the person and work of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. We praise God for that. We sing, "O, what He has done. All glory and honor to the Son of God." We're going to remember that sacrifice later in our service through the communion service.

That's not all God has done for us in Christ. Yes, we have redemption. Yes, we have the forgiveness of sin. But the Bible tells us in Ephesians 1 through 3 that we also have received an inheritance, that God has opened up the coffers of heaven, the goodness and grace of heaven, and He's bestowing this upon us each and every moment of our days. Then one day when we see our Savior and Lord face to face, we will receive the full measure of that inheritance.

Now, as we have learned these things in the first three chapters, a question comes that begins to gnaw at us. "If I'm a person who identifies myself in Christ—meaning I center my life on the person of Jesus Christ, He's my all in all, He's everything to me—then how should I talk? How should I act? How should I love? How should I serve? What should my practice look like? Now that I know what it is that I profess, what should my behavior look like?"

At the 50-yard line of this book, we've already seen all that we are in Christ. We now pivot to how we are called to live and behave as followers of Christ. In chapter four, Paul begins with the word, "Therefore." Therefore, in light of all we've learned so far, now do this one thing. In verse one, he puts into a nutshell all he's going to tell us for the rest of the letter. He wants us to "*walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.*"

We're going to need God's grace to do this. We're going to need His knowledge and wisdom to lead and guide us, so we will walk in a way that is worthy of all the things we now know about who we are in Christ, so we might bring great glory to the God Who has saved us and Who now wants to use us for His Kingdom work. In Ephesians 4:1, Paul defines and describes the Christian life as a walk. It's a walk of significance, a walk that showcases and brings to a watching world what we're called to be and do. We need to show them there's something more to life than just ourselves.

Organizations have come to realize that walking can bring significance to their cause, walking to raise funds. We might walk for the eradication of MS. We walk to raise awareness and funds for people in need of drinking water. The army has added the idea of doing a hundred-mile walk to eradicate soldier suicide. We walk to bring a spotlight to things that are important.

Amanda and I have some friends in Hinckley who have taken it upon themselves to bring a spotlight on a cancer that hits close to home for us—breast cancer. For years they have walked 40, 50, 60 miles over the course of a few days so they could raise awareness and funds for research that seeks to eradicate a terrible disease. This walk is something very simple. It's something most of us are able to do. But it's something that brings a deeper meaning.

To walk is to put one foot in front of the other. To walk is to bring a level of accomplishment. After walking this journey, you realize you've accomplished something. You look back and think, "Here is what I've accomplished." The Christian walk is just that. Paul could have described the Christian life with all kinds of metaphors. He could have used lofty theological words to explain it. But he's speaking on a subject so big and broad as the Christian faith by using elementary language.

Many of us think the Christian life is a whole lot more. We think that to prove our faithfulness and holiness, we have to get the biggest Bible and put it under our arm. We've got to speak with big theological words. We've got to be able to prove our holiness, because that is what will capture the heart and mind of God. But I like what J. Vernon McGee says regarding the Christian life: "A great many people think the Christian life is some great, overwhelming experience, and you take off like a rocket going into space."

That's not where you live the Christian life. Rather, it's in your home, your office, in the school room, on the street. Notice what Paul says here. The way you get around this life is to walk. You are to walk in Christ. That's what I want to talk about this morning. As Christ followers, we have been given a great position and a great many privileges in Christ and are now being invited to walk and be part of a journey. How do we do this? I want you to notice three things in our text this morning.

Walking the walk means we must move differently.

The first thing we need to recognize is that this walk means we have to move differently. Paul says, "*I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.*" Christians aren't the only people walking in this world. Paul will later say in the book of Ephesians that there are those who walk in darkness and those who walk in light. As Christ followers, we are to walk in light. That means those who aren't in Christ are walking in darkness. But we're all walking. Yet our walk must be a different kind of walk, and we're walking in a different direction. We need to walk in a manner worthy of the calling we've received.

The word "worthy" in the original Greek speaks of the scales we would put weights on. There are three positions on which weights can be on scales. You can have one weight on one of the scales. Or you can have a weight holding down the other side of the scales. Or third, the two sides can have equal weights. When we think of scales, we can ask, "What do the scales of my life look like? Are they equal or is one side being weighed down more than the other?"

Paul is saying that those who are in Christ should represent balanced scales. What does that mean? Our life, our walk, should match our talk. Our practice should be in accord with the profession of our faith. It's easy for us as Christians to talk a good game, to sing the praises of God, to proclaim how much we love the Lord. The Bible says the tongue can boast a great many things. But Paul says, "I want your walk to match your talk. I don't want you to be ahead of your skis in what you're boasting about, about how much you love the Lord. I want you to boast only in those things you can back up equally with your actions. I want your faith to be lived out in the same measure as your talk." Usually that's not the case for us, so the watching world cries foul and hypocrisy. Paul wants us to walk in a way worthy of the call we've received.

- Notice in verse one that our walk is centered on our calling. This is totally opposite to what our culture tells us today. Our world says, "Your lifestyle defines your identity." But Paul tells us, "In God's equation, your identity defines your lifestyle." On the heels of the first three chapters, Paul gives us our identity: We are sinners saved by grace and loved by God.
- We have inherited His blessings and are welcomed into His family.
- We've been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms.
- We are God's workmanship, created in Christ to do good works.

All of these things are true of us. All of this leads us to a certain lifestyle. Paul is saying, "I want your life to live out the calling you've received."

Parents, we tell our children this all the time when they go out with their friends: "Remember who you are." Why? Because in remembering who they are, their identity will then define their actions and decisions. Paul says, "When you remember your calling, you will make right choices. It's when you forget who you are in Christ that your choices get all messed up."

Now remember, this calling is different from the world's calling. The world calls us to be selfish. The world calls us to self-advancement and self-care. Our calling is completely different from the world's. But in another sense, each of our callings as a Christian might be different from that of another Christian. Paul says to a group of free people, "I'm a prisoner." He was called to a certain kind of tribulation that others weren't experiencing. Some of us might also be called to great difficulties or sorrows. For others, it might be a time of ease—or something in between. But notice that Paul calls himself "a prisoner for the Lord."

Our calling and our place in this world is not a byproduct of our circumstances. It's not happenstance. It is given to us by the sovereign choice and plan of God. We are where we are because God has placed us there; He's called each of us to a unique assignment. Yet, as different as our callings may be, we are all to live in light of our calling in such a way that it leads us to godly and holy choices. In order to balance out those scales, Paul tells us to pursue two things.

We are to pursue humility.

How do we live differently? We pursue humility. Paul writes that we are "*to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility....*" In other words, we must have a proper understanding of who we are and not think too highly of ourselves. Why might we think so highly of ourselves? Back in Ephesians 3:20, we see what might explain the reason for this. It's because we have a God Who is doing "*far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us.*" How will God do immeasurably more than we can think or imagine? He'll do it through us. What can happen then is we will begin to think, "Look at what I'm doing." Instead of being humble, we start to become haughty, thinking God needs us and that we're God's greatest gift to His Kingdom work. Humility reminds us that the power that's working within us is the Holy Spirit, Who should receive the "*glory in the church and in Christ Jesus*" (Ephesians 3:21). It's God's glory, not ours.

So we must remember that when God is doing miracles through us, we're still broken and finite people. We'll know if we're humble based on certain evidence. Are we gentle? Are we patient? How are we doing with bearing with one another? If you're haughty, you'll think everybody else is dumb and you're smart. Everybody else is a fool, but you're wise. Everybody else is weak, but you're strong. Everybody else is sinful, but you are holy. God says, "Remember who you are." Ephesians 2:1-2 says, "*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked.*" That's how you used to walk. If you think the reason you're now walking in a manner worthy of the calling you've received is because of you, remember how you walked before God found you and saved you. God is saying, "I want you to treat other people looking through that lens."

So in humility, we start being gentle with people, because they're failing around us. They're flawed. They have idiosyncrasies, issues and struggles. We're patient with them. Literally, we have a long fuse. We don't blow up at them when their failures affect us. We bear with them. That is, when they're limping along, we don't go by them and say, "What's wrong with you, loser?" We bear them up, serving as a crutch for them so they can walk the journey as well. Why do we do this?

We are to pursue unity.

Not only do we need humility as individuals, as a church we also need to pursue unity. Paul says, "Collectively, I need all of you to be humble, patient and gentle, bearing with one another, because God wants a unified church." In verse three he writes that we should be "*eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*" That word "eager" in the original Greek literally means to give maximum effort and spare no expense. It means to hurry, hasten, exert yourself, not simply being willing, but also diligently following through. It means we are to make unity our goal with humility as our mindset. "I'm going to do my best, in order that we as the body of Christ might be one."

Seven times in our text we'll see the word "one." That means it's probably something you should underline and pay attention to. Look at verses four through six: "*There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*" Paul is saying that if the church collectively is going to accomplish its walk, it needs individuals who are humble and making every effort to be unified.

He will tell us in a moment why the church must be unified. He wants the church to be going in the same direction, so he tells us, "Forget the things you divide over."

Notice that Paul doesn't even mention what the things that divide us are, although there are plenty of things that create distinctions among us. Rather, he focuses on the things that unite us. These include our calling, the body we're part of, the Spirit Who indwells us, the hope we have, the Lord Whom we serve, the faith we share, the baptism that professes our faith, the God Whom we follow—in all of these we have oneness. This should remind us that there are far more things that unite us than would ever divide us. We need to encourage one another and exert as much effort as possible to ensure that we stay united and not divided. This will be very important, because in this coming year we have another election which could so easily divide us. We'll begin to focus on things that aren't as important as all these "ones" in our text. We'll start following the people we like, the people we resonate with; we'll create distinctions among ourselves. But God is saying there is more that unites us than divides us.

While the world walks a diverging path, the people of God stay united—how? Through humility and the pursuit of unity.

Walking the walk means we must minister to others so they can develop.

The reason why we need all this oneness is because God is going to call us to minister to others so they can develop. Look at what Paul writes next. He's focused the first six verses on you and me as individuals, writing, "I want you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling you have received. I want you to be humble. I want you to be eager to pursue unity. I want you to bear with one another. I want you to be patient." All of that pivots in verse seven.

⁷But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸Therefore it says,

"When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men."

⁹(In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? ¹⁰He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) ¹¹And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ

The spotlight comes off you and me and is now focused on Jesus Christ. Paul says, "I want you to walk a certain way because of your calling, and here's your example: Jesus Christ. He is the One Who walked in a way that was worthy of His calling perfectly. He did it with humility. He did it through oneness with the Father. He did it with patience."

Notice what He also does: He gives. Verse seven says, "*But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.*" What did Jesus give us? He gave us redemption through His sacrifice on the cross of Calvary. He's given us life, grace and forgiveness. Paul then paraphrases Psalm 68. I don't think Paul was trying to exegete that Psalm, but rather was using it as an illustration. He doesn't quote it verbatim, but is using it as an example of what he's trying to communicate. He wants us to be aware of what Christ has done and how this should impact our lives.

Essentially what he's saying is that Jesus Christ left heaven and came to earth, so that He can give people what they need in order to one day be in heaven. Are you following that? He left heaven, came down to earth, lived among us, then died for us. Through this He gave gifts to us: the gift of redemption, the gift of an inheritance and the gift of the Holy Spirit. As part of that inheritance, He also has given us the ability to one day ascend and be with Him forever in heaven.

What in the world does that have to do with us and the giving of gifts? Verses 11-12 say, "*He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up of the body of Christ...*" What are we to do with this in light of the illustration from Psalm 68? I believe this will change how and why you serve. Essentially Jesus modeled for us in His day what we are to do in the here and now. He took that which was in heaven and brought it to earth, so people might taste heaven on earth and gain an appetite for what they will one day have in glory. We can't do that. We're not able to bring redemption, no matter how hard we try. We are sinners and are ourselves in need of salvation. But now that Christ has saved us, now that He has redeemed us, now that He has made us heirs with Him in heaven, our spiritual gifting is that God has uniquely gifted each and every one of His children with gifts that come from heaven. These are not gifts of our own. We are to use these gifts on earth among other people in order that they might also have a taste of heaven. When they are able through us to glimpse heaven, it gives them an appetite for heaven.

Let's talk about gifts for a moment. Paul also gives some lists in other places, including Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. Let's look at some different kinds of gifts. Paul says we are to share our gifts. We have been given a measure of grace which we are in turn to give to others. This involves our time, talent, treasures and testimony. Whatever God has graced us with, we are to share with others.

So let me ask you something this morning. We talk about how much God has given us, but does our walk match our talk? Are we serving and giving like Christ has called us to?

There are speaking gifts.

Paul first mentions speaking gifts. He says there are those who are apostles, prophets, teachers or evangelists. These are individuals who use the gift of their mouths. I'm using my speaking gift right now. I'm not the only one in the room who is doing that. There are all kinds of classes going on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings with our students. There are Bible studies and small groups. I saw two ladies having a mentoring conversation in the foyer after the earlier service; the older lady was speaking truth to the younger lady.

People who teach are using their speaking gifts. They're using their mouths to give people what God has brought through His Word to earth, so that people will have an appetite for and a glimpse of heaven. My job is to use my gift today to give you a

glimpse of heaven, to give you an appetite for heaven. The goal is for you to listen, learn and walk in a manner worthy of the calling.

There are shepherding gifts.

Those aren't the only gifts; notice there is also a shepherding gift. Along with apostles, prophets, evangelists and teachers, Paul also includes shepherds. These are people who are to care for and minister to the sheep. These are our elders and deacons. Their role is to be the hands and feet of Jesus, to lovingly minister to the needs of people.

If you're in a small group, you're being led by a leader whose job is to shepherd you, to care for you. When you become a part of Village Bible Church, you are assigned an elder whose job is to shepherd and care for you. They are to use their gifts in that way. Where did they learn that gift? From Jesus.

There are service gifts.

Then we have service gifts. This includes hospitality. It's the use of hands. There has been a lot of serving here today. The spotlight may be on the people who get the microphones and the stage, but the church is what it is today because of all the things happening behind the scenes, not because of what you see on the stage. You wouldn't be able to hear me if it wasn't for the AV guys. We wouldn't have places to park if it wasn't for the parking lot team. I don't know if you noticed, but we had all kinds of cops in our parking lot this morning. There were people starting fires in Bliss Woods. It's all under control, but our parking team and security team were on that today.

How would you have liked it if you leave this service and the whole parking lot was engulfed in flames? I'm glad we have that service team. Without them, here's what would have happened otherwise: "I forgot what Pastor Tim even talked about because my car is on fire. Who cares what he said?"

People also handed you the bulletin. They will hand you the communion elements. All kinds of work has gone on this week to make sure everything is in order. You who do the serving might think, "I just do this, but Pastor Tim and Pastor Josh and the worship team—they're really doing the ministry." No. Paul says all of these things are equally valuable. They're each part of the body. We can't just have one part of the body working but not the other part. We need each one working, some behind the scenes and some in front. We need to be wherever God has said, "I want you to use your gifts here."

No matter what you're doing, here is what your focus should be on: "I am bringing heaven down to earth to give people a glimpse and an appetite for heaven." You'll park cars in a whole different way. You'll hand bulletins out in a whole different way. You will preach in a whole different way. You will teach kids in a whole different way. You will mentor other women in a whole different way. You will be with teenagers in a whole different way.

When you recognize that you're not just doing some menial work, filling a void or gap, but that you are the manifest wisdom of the Kingdom work of God, you'll then be showing the people of this world what heaven will be like. When you start taking your gift seriously in this way, you'll be amazed at what God will do. He will do far more than we can ever ask for or imagine.

Let's consider a couple reasons why you might not use your gifts. First, you might be scared. "What if I fail?" I've been a pastor here for 20 years and have not known of anyone who has failed. God takes care of it. Now, does that mean we're always at our best? Are we always perfect? The answer is no. Go back to some of Tim's early sermons—even last week's sermon—I fail all the time. I can't tell you how many times I've come before this congregation and said, "I was planning on doing this, but we need to take a detour. Things didn't work out like I thought they would." I know you're afraid. I'm afraid. To step out in faith like this can be a scary thing.

Some of us are squeezed out of time. We talk to you about using your gifts and the response we get is, "I'm just too busy. I'm too busy to serve the Lord." Why? Could it be that we're too busy doing the things on earth that we're forgetting to bring heaven down to earth? Find time in your schedule. It might mean getting rid of some things that are temporal so the eternal can have its place in your life, so you can show the world what heaven is like and why they should have an appetite for it. Whether you're scared or you're squeezed out of time, my desire is that you would stretch.

I didn't show up to this pulpit completed. I was 26 years old when I was given the opportunity to preach my very first sermon. Do you know how many sermons I had preached before that? Zero. I remember people telling me, "You'll do great," but I was petrified. The whole way home I said to Amanda, "Be honest with me. That was terrible. I'll stay with you; just tell me how terrible it was." She said, "No, it was good. You can do better, but it was good." And do you know what this church said? "Do it again. Do it again."

I told the elders, "You need to find someone better." But they've been lousy at their search. Little by little, by stretching, God has given me the grace I need to hopefully bring heaven down to earth, so that your appetite for heaven will grow. So you need to stretch. You need to take whatever measure of God's grace He's given you and extend that.

Can I share a statistic with you about the Sugar Grove campus of Village Bible Church,? I don't do this to prompt guilt, but as a way of illustration. When we look at the number of volunteers, people serving and people giving financially to the church, , compared to the number people who call this place their home, both of those groups hover around 50%. Just think what God could do if 100% of us would stretch and join in this walk of doing and giving as Jesus has taught us to do and give. Things would be far more abundant than we could ever ask for or imagine. I'll leave that between you and the Lord. The gospel work could go even farther than it is if we would just step out in faith and minister to others, so they could develop.

Walking the walk means we must grow in maturity by helping others deepen their walk.

We need to see one final truth. We'll spend more time on this third point more in the weeks to come.

Paul finishes this section with these words:

¹³ ...until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

How do you and I walk in a manner worthy of the calling we've received? We keep walking. As we keep walking, step by step we attain more faith. We attain more knowledge. We attain more depth. We attain more maturity. The reason we need to walk this way is so that those who are behind us will know the way to go and so they can follow our lead. Maybe it's your children. Maybe it's your grandchildren. Maybe it's a student in your small group. Maybe it's a kid you teach in your Sunday School class. Whoever it is, you are called to walk this walk so that others may follow you. I am where I'm at in my walk because people walked ahead of me and you are where you are because others walked before you.

Now it's your job, as you continue to follow them and continue to follow Christ, walking in a manner worthy of the calling so that others can follow behind you. In this way, we are able to bring everybody to unity and maturity in the faith. No longer are we being tossed to and fro, but we are all crossing the finish line in victory.

Here's what Paul wants us to understand in this text. Christ has walked this walk. He has modeled for us what it means to walk in a manner worthy of the calling He received. Now we are to follow Him. As we follow Him, our job is to do this in such a way that those behind us can follow us and so that a united church can be presented to our God in heaven, mature, equipped and functioning to the glory of God.

So what's your place in this? Where are you at in your walk? Are there things that need to be worked on? Is your humility something to be desired? Are you not pursuing the unity you should? Are you not using your gifts Christ has given you to give to others?

Here's the thing. Maybe right now you're not where you need to be. This is why we turn to the cross and seek forgiveness. As we prepare for our time of communion, this is a time to remember what Christ has done. We are to be reminded of what He did in His walk. Maybe today you're not feeling very worthy. If that's the case, look to the cross and to the One Who walked perfectly. We look to Him for our forgiveness and redemption. We also confess to Him, "I did not walk worthy of the calling I received this week. Father, forgive me." We're told that because of Christ, He will forgive us and cleanse us of all unrighteousness. So take a few moments to examine your heart. Be encouraged that as Christ finished His walk, and as those who followed Him and who have gone before us finished their walk, He will also give us the grace and the gifts so we can finish our walk in Christ.