

Marks of a True Disciple

The Conduct of the Disciple

The Daily Walk of a True Disciple

Ephesians 4:1-3

Over the past several weeks, we have been considering what it truly means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. We have seen:

- The Call of the Disciple — that Christ calls us not merely to admire Him, but to follow Him
- The Cost of Discipleship — that following Him requires surrender and sacrifice
- The Continuance of the Disciple — that a true disciple abides in His Word over time
- The Love of the Disciple — that the defining mark of a disciple is seen in how we love one another
- The Character of the Disciple — that the Spirit of God produces a distinct character within the life of the believer

Each of these truths answers an important question about discipleship:

- How does it begin?
- What does it require?
- What proves it is real?
- What marks it relationally?
- What is produced inwardly?

That brings us to another very practical question:

“How does a disciple actually live day by day?”

It is possible to understand the call, to acknowledge the cost,

to even speak about love and character, and yet still struggle with how those things are expressed in everyday life.

That's what the text in Ephesians shows us. In Ephesians 4, the Apostle Paul makes a very important transition. In the first three chapters, he has dealt with doctrine — what God has done for us in Christ. Beginning in chapter 4, he turns to duty — how we are to live in light of that truth.

He begins with:

“I therefore... beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.”

In other words, Paul is saying, “If this is who you are in Christ... then this is how you are to walk.”

As in our other studies, this is not a call to become a disciple — it is a call to live like one. We will see some very familiar truths in this message that we have recently covered in other messages but they need to be repeated and considered in light of this study.

I. A WORTHY WALK — V. 1

“That ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called”

This section begins with a personal appeal: “beseech you.” The word “beseech” carries the idea of urging, pleading, or strongly appealing.

And he does this as “the prisoner of the Lord.” He’s not complaining about his circumstances — he is reminding them that his life is already yielded to Christ. His conduct matches His calling, and he is urging them to do the same.

A. The connection to what precedes — “I therefore”

1. Paul is connecting what he is about to say to

everything he has said in the first three chapters: salvation by grace; our position in Christ; our redemption through His blood; our unity in one body. Now he says: "Because all that is true... this is how you are to live."

2. Doctrine is never meant to end in knowledge — it is meant to produce a changed walk.

B. The command given — "that ye walk..."

1. The word "walk," as we saw in our study on that very word some months ago, speaks of one's manner of life — the daily pattern, the direction, the conduct of life.
2. This is speaking of how we live day by day; how we conduct ourselves consistently.

C. The standard required — "worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called"

1. "Worthy" (ἀξιῶς) carries the idea of something that corresponds properly... something that matches... something that is fitting. It means to live in a way that is consistent with what we have been called to.

Colossians 1:10

¹⁰ That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

1 Thessalonians 2:12

¹² That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

2. The word "vocation" (κλήσις) refers to our calling

(literally means an invitation to a banquet) — not necessarily our occupation, but our spiritual calling in Christ. Paul is saying that our walk should match our calling.

D. The implication of this command

1. This does not mean we earn our calling by our walk. It means our walk reflects the reality of our calling.
2. The true disciple does not walk worthy in order to become something... he walks worthy because he already is something in Christ.

II. A HUMBLE SPIRIT — V. 2A

“With all lowliness and meekness”

After establishing the standard — a walk that is “worthy of the vocation” — Paul now begins to describe what that walk looks like in everyday life.

He does not begin with actions — he begins with attitudes, because before a man’s conduct is seen outwardly, it is formed inwardly.

A. The completeness of these attitudes — “with all...”

These are attitudes that are to characterize the whole of the believer’s life.

B. The first attitude — “lowliness”

1. This speaks of humility of mind — a right view of oneself.
2. In Scripture, humility is a mark of spiritual maturity. It is the opposite of pride, self-exaltation, and self-importance.

Philippians 2:3

³ *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*

C. The second attitude — “meekness”

1. If “lowliness” is how we view ourselves (deals with pride within), then “meekness” is how we respond to others.
2. Meekness, as many have said, is strength under control — a yielded spirit that does not insist on its own way.

Matthew 11:29

²⁹ *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.*

D. The importance of these attitudes in daily life

1. A man may understand doctrine, speak truth, and even serve faithfully, but if he lacks humility and meekness, his walk will not be “worthy.”
2. These attitudes affect how we respond when corrected; how we handle disagreement; how we treat others when things don’t go our way.

E. The ultimate example is Christ Himself (Phil. 2:5-8)

III. A PATIENT FORBEARANCE — V. 2B

“With longsuffering, forbearing one another in love”

Paul now moves to how those attitudes are expressed in relationship to others. A worthy walk is proven in how we deal with people.

A. The first expression — “longsuffering”

1. This speaks of patience under provocation, as we have seen before in recent studies.
2. It is the ability to endure wrong, to bear with difficulty, and to do so without reacting in anger or retaliation.

Proverbs 14:29

²⁹ *He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding; but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.*

B. The second expression — “forbearing one another”

1. “Forbearing” means to put up with; to bear with; to endure the weakness, faults, and differences of others.
2. This is dealing with one another — fellow believers. It points to something that is very real: people will not always be easy to deal with.

Colossians 3:13

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.

Notice in this verse that forbearing comes before forgiving. It is the willingness to endure before the issue is even resolved. This is patience with people — not an indifference to sin.

C. The motive that governs it — “in love”

1. Without this, longsuffering and forbearance could become cold tolerance or silent frustration.
2. This ties back to the message from a few weeks

ago on “The Love of the Disciple.” The same love that defines the disciple (John 13) now governs how they treat others.

1 Corinthians 13:4

⁴ Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

Love is what produces longsuffering.

D. The necessity of this in the Christian life

It’s one thing to say we’re humble or meek or that we love others. It’s another thing entirely to live them out when someone disappoints us or responds in a way we do not expect.

E. The danger if this is absent

Without this kind of patience and forbearance, differences become divisions and relationships become strained.

F. The example of the Lord Himself

2 Peter 3:9

⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

IV. A GUARDED UNITY — V. 3

“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”

All of what we have seen so far leads to the preservation of unity among God’s people.

A. The responsibility given — “endeavouring”

1. The word carries the idea of diligence; earnest effort; intentional pursuit.
2. It means, “This does not happen automatically — it must be actively maintained.”
3. Unity is something that requires effort.

Hebrews 12:14

¹⁴ Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

B. The nature of this unity — “the unity of the Spirit”

1. Paul is not saying we are to create unity — he is saying we are to keep it. Unity is given by the Spirit — not produced by man.
2. This unity exists because we are in one body, we are one Spirit, and we belong to one Lord (vv. 4-6).

1 Corinthians 12:13

¹³ For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

C. The task defined — “to keep”

1. This means to guard; to preserve; to maintain.
2. This implies an important truth: unity can be damaged if it is not guarded.

D. The means provided — “in the bond of peace”

1. Peace is the binding agent that holds unity together.

2. The word “bond” speaks of something that ties or holds things in place.

Colossians 3:14–15

¹⁴ And above all these things *put on* charity, which is the bond of perfectness. ¹⁵ And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

3. Peace does not mean the absence of all disagreement. It means a spirit that refuses to divide, a heart that seeks reconciliation, and a disposition that promotes harmony.

E. The connection to the previous points

1. Without lowliness, pride will fracture unity.
2. Without meekness, self-will will disturb unity.
3. Without longsuffering, impatience will strain unity.
4. Without forbearance in love, unity will break down.

F. The importance in the life of the church

Unity is maintained when God’s people walk in humility, respond with patience, and act in love.

Psalm 133:1

¹ Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* for brethren to dwell together in unity!

Conclusion:

In these verses, the Apostle Paul has shown us what it means to walk as a true disciple in daily life.

- A Worthy Walk — a life that matches our calling
- A Humble Spirit — lowliness and meekness before God and others
- A Patient Forbearance — enduring and bearing with one another in love
- A Guarded Unity — diligently preserving the unity God has given

What should stand out to us is that true discipleship is seen in daily conduct.

The question is not simply, "Do I know what a disciple is?" It should be, "Am I walking as one?"

As we move forward in this series, we will see that the disciple is not only called to walk rightly among God's people... He is also sent into the world with a purpose.

But before we can go effectively, we must be walking as we ought.