

Introduction

As we continue our walk through Ephesians today I want to move on to the second half of the Epistle. Paul has spent the first half telling us of all the amazing things God has done for us through His boundless grace. It is important that we understand just what he has done for us so that we can move on and follow the guidance of the second half where the Apostle explains how we should live given all that God has done for us.

These opening six verses of **Ephesians 4** seem to me to naturally split into two sections; that is, **4:1-3** which almost continue the prayer that Paul brought us in **3:14-19**; and then **4:4-6** where we are reminded that there is one God and Lord of all. However, there is so much contained in these opening six verses that today I want us to focus on **4:1-3** and then next month take a close look at **4:4-6**.

Part 1 - Opening

Paul begins the chapter with the words: "*As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you ...*" The NLT actually opens with the word "*Therefore*" whilst the ESV begins: "*I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you ...*" What Paul means here is that since God has done so much for us it should follow that we live our lives in a particular way and a way that is totally different to how we used to live before we came to faith in Christ. The word "*therefore*" appears in a number of places in Scripture and always suggests that because of what we have just been told then we should do what is about to be described or explained. This passage is no different since Paul is now about to tell us how we should live as believers in and followers of Jesus Christ.

I should remind you that we thought about Paul being "*a prisoner for the Lord*" when we looked at **3:1**. Paul was being held as a prisoner not by the Lord Himself but because of his work for the Lord in preaching and teaching the gospel wherever he went. I suspect that being a prisoner because of this work helped with Paul's credentials by reminding people of his sincerity in serving the Lord. I think it's also true to say that being in prison for his service to the Lord had not damaged Paul's faith in any way, in fact it may well have been strengthened since it meant he relied more and more on the help and strength that the Lord gave him through the Holy Spirit. It's also true to say that Paul is demonstrating that following Christ isn't always easy and sometimes involves hardship and difficulties.

In **4:1** the NIV and ESV versions use the word "*urge*" whilst the NLT says "*beg*". Some versions I've looked at use the word "*entreat*", a word which carries the meaning of this being an earnest request. Each of those words carry that thought of the need for urgency; what Paul wants is that we should live our lives in Christ now and not put it off for some date in the future. Coming to faith in Christ represents a major change in our lives and it is vital that we react accordingly and live a life that reflects our faith. Remember that coming to faith isn't the end of a journey but rather the beginning of a life long journey of walking with Christ each and every day of our lives.

Part 2 – 4:1-3

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Scripture in general and Paul in particular give consistent teaching on how believers in Christ should live their daily lives. Paul wrote his Epistle to the Galatians, which contains that verse detailing the fruit of the Spirit, in 50/51 or 53 AD. Even though this Epistle to the Ephesians was written some time later, probably in 60 AD, it still contains similar and consistent advice on how we should conduct our daily living.

All of that leads me to ask, if we are to live a life in and with Christ what does that life involve? In the three verses that follow Paul tries to answer that challenging question.

In the middle of **4:1** Paul tells the Ephesians “*to live a life worthy of the calling you have received*”. The ESV phrases it slightly differently when it says we should “*walk in a manner worthy of the calling*”. Scripture frequently uses the word “walk” to refer to our daily lives and Paul is suggesting here that we should walk side by side with Christ and He should be our ultimate role model.

Why though would Paul urge us to live each day in a manner that is “*worthy of the calling which we have received*”? What is that “*calling*”? Firstly, we have been called to salvation as a result of Jesus dying on the cross to pay the price of the sins of all sinners which, of course, includes us. Secondly, we have been called to the service of God. God has forgiven us for all the wrong and bad things we have done and so it surely follows that by way of thanks we should gladly serve Him. Quite simply we have been called to be members of God’s family with all that being in a family means.

In **Romans 8:30** Paul tells us that we have been predestined, that is chosen in advance, by God before adding that those He “*predestined, He also called*”. Earlier in our look at Ephesians we learned that God “*chose us in Him before the creation of the world*” (**Ephesians 1:4**). The rest of that verse adds that we were chosen “*to be holy and blameless in His sight*”.

As part of our being predestined and chosen we have also been forgiven our sins and received the gift of eternal life. We now have direct access to God and are able to talk to Him as our Father. Paul adds to that thought in **Galatians 4:6-7** when he tells us: “*Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father.’ So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.*” On top of that, when we leave this life on earth we will enter paradise and be with the Lord permanently. Just think about all that for a moment and consider the great privileges that our being called by God brings. It is indeed a high calling; something the writer to the Hebrews refers to as a “*heavenly calling*” (**Hebrews 3:1**), whilst Paul tells Timothy that God “*has called us to a holy life*” (**2 Timothy 1:9**). What an amazing privilege and having such a privilege surely means that we should live lives that are indeed worthy of that privilege and reflects our position as children of God.

Just what does Paul mean though when he tells us to live that worthy life? In the first chapter of his Epistle to the Philippians, Paul told them: “*Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel ...*” (**Philippians 1:27**). We have been

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called through that gospel of Christ to follow and serve Him and as Paul says, to “*stand firm in one Spirit*”.

Now, here in **4:2-3** Paul gives us a few clues as to how we should do this. When you look at these two verses carefully you may see some parallels with the fruit of the Spirit as mentioned in **Galatians 5:22-23** which Francis has been taking us through each month. The first thing Paul mentions here in **4:2** is that we should be “*completely humble*” and the Apostle pairs that with the thought of being “*gentle*”. My Concise Oxford Dictionary defines the word “*humble*” as meaning “*having or showing a modest or low estimate of one’s own importance*”; nowhere does it mention that being humble means being weak!

No one ever said that living a Christian life was easy and yet here in **4:2** Paul is urging Christians to be “*completely humble*”. Given the prevailing Greek culture at the time the Epistle was written that was not as easy as it may sound since an attitude of humility did not truly exist. The Greeks were a proud people who regarded humility as a pitiable weakness and anyone who showed humility was regarded as being cowardly, weak and ineffectual. Consequently there was no word as such in NT Greek for “*humility*” and so the word that is used here, “*tapeinophrosune*”, is a compound word that may well have been coined by Paul himself. The word means “*to think or judge with lowliness, and hence to have lowliness of mind*”. It seems that this rather strange word was only ever used in a derogatory sense, mainly against Christians who demonstrated a humble attitude in their lives. However, as we struggle to live humble lives we have the greatest possible role model to look up to; Jesus Christ Himself. In **Matthew 11** the Lord speaks about rest for the weary and in **11:29** says: “*Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*” Paul also spoke of the Lord’s humility when he wrote “*Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross!*” (**Philippians 2:5-8**) If the Lord Himself can live a life of humility then it surely falls to us to follow suit and live in the same way.

Paul certainly lived that way and displayed a great level of humility in his service for Christ. In **Philippians 3:4-11** the Apostle lays out what may be described as his CV! He was a devout Jew and a zealous Pharisee. He persecuted Christians and did his utmost to wipe out the fledgling Christian church. He followed the Law to the letter and had a perfect Jewish pedigree. And now, having given all that up to follow Christ, he says quite clearly “*whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.*” (**Philippians 3:7**) I see that as a clear statement of Paul’s new found humility. With God’s help Paul moved from being an arrogant and zealous Pharisee to being a willing servant of Christ.

Sadly it’s true to say that we live in an ego driven world where humility doesn’t seem to exist. That is not the lifestyle that Christians should reflect although unfortunately over the years I have met some Christians who are ego-driven and very self-centred. However, we should not follow their example but rather follow Christ and His example and that is why Bishop J C Ryle reportedly said: “*The surest mark of true conversion is humility.*”

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Paul pairs the thought of being humble with the idea of our also being gentle. Whilst we can regard humility as an attitude being gentle is that attitude put into action. Being gentle is therefore very similar to being humble but also includes the thought of our being mild or kind and certainly not rough or violent in word or deed. As part of his sermon series on the fruit of the Spirit as recorded in [Galatians 5:22-23](#), Francis spoke recently about meekness and said: "*Meekness is not natural, no-one tends to be meek, weak yes, self-pitying yes, but meek no; it is supernatural. It is a characteristic formed through the presence of Jesus within the person's life. Meekness is the mark of His people.*"¹ Being believers in Christ should almost automatically lead to our being gentle and being willingly dealt with by God without argument or resistance. God knows best and He has a plan for each and every one of us. As believers in Christ we should also be considerate of others and take their views and feelings into account. If we all followed this advice and led lives of humility and gentleness there would be less division and disagreement in the church and our service for the Lord would improve and grow. Just as we should follow Jesus' example by being humble so we should follow His example of being gentle with everyone we deal with. When Paul wrote to the church in Corinth to defend his ministry he opened [2 Corinthians 10:1](#) with the words "*By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you*". That is how Paul described the Lord and so by our being humble and gentle we are following Christ Himself.

Even for Christians relationships can sometimes be tense and potentially explosive, requiring the skills of someone who can calm the situation. In [Romans 12:10, 18](#) Paul provides a template for how to bring calm into a tense situation. He writes: "*Be kindly affectionate . . . giving preference to one another . . . If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men*" ([Romans 12:10, 18](#)). A tense moment calls for calm and the lowering of temperatures and we can do that for one another if we show love, affection, and humility toward every person.

As we continue in [4:2](#) we next come to the thought of our being patient. That is something that I suspect many of us find very difficult to be. We get impatient waiting in queues; we get impatient waiting in traffic jams, and many of us get impatient when our internet connection isn't as fast as we would like. Patience involves our being able to handle the faults of others as well as their failings. None of that is easy but if we show patience then we are demonstrating our love for others. Scripture repeatedly tells us to love one another. In his second Epistle the Apostle John tells the church to which he is writing "*I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another.*" ([2 John 5](#)). We can love one another by showing patience at all times. The KJV uses the word "*longsuffering*" instead of "*patience*" and let's face it; it does sometimes feel that in showing patience with some people we are suffering for a long time! However, that is what Christian love is all about; loving our fellow believers in all circumstances.

Ephesians [4:3](#) makes interesting reading since it talks of peace and unity, and those two thoughts are linked together by the Holy Spirit. We can only be united in peace with other believers when the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives. It is the Holy Spirit working in us that brings out our love for fellow believers and by demonstrating that love then peace becomes possible between us. It is this bond of peace in and through the Holy Spirit that binds us

¹ Williamson, Francis, *Gentleness/Meekness*, Kings Norton BC, 25 Jun 2023

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together as one family. However, this bond needs working at and can be challenged from time to time by outside influences. False teachers were at work in the churches in Ephesus and elsewhere and they were doing their utmost to undermine the good news of Jesus Christ. Paul always urged the churches he wrote to to resist such teaching and he was adamant that such teachers and teaching should be resisted at all times. False teaching still abounds today and needs to be resisted if we are to maintain that bond of love and peace with one another in the Holy Spirit.

If you doubt that false teachers are at work in this day and age then you only need to consider what is happening in various denominations over the issues of same-sex marriage and transgender people. Let me give you an example. A very good friend of mine recently told me that the LGBT... community had published their own version of the Bible called the *Queen James Bible*. My friend wasn't wrong and in fact I was amazed to discover that it was published in the USA in 2012! I have looked at some of the verses they have changed and distorted and they represent the LGBT... view of the truth and not the truth as God intended it to be written and interpreted. That is why as believers in Christ we all need to be aware of such activities and resist them. This distorted version of Scripture undoubtedly shows that such false teachers are active in more ways than we may care to imagine.

It is vital that we do not let false teachers of any description damage our relationship with Christ and we need to be diligent in remaining close to Him in our daily walk.

Conclusion

Many mistakenly believe that coming to faith in Christ as their Lord and Saviour is the end of a journey; it isn't, it is only the beginning. In the opening three verses of [Ephesians 4](#) Paul gives all believers some clear guidelines on how they should live their new found life as followers of Christ.

This new life requires a complete transformation in the way we think and behave. To help us with that transformation, Paul's guidance in [4:1-3](#) is clear and unambiguous. We should live lives worthy of our calling to be members of God's family. We should be humble and gentle in all our dealings with others, whether they are believers or not. We should also be patient in all that we do and make allowances for the shortcomings of others. Above all we should follow Jesus' command which John reiterates in [1 John 4:11b](#), "*We should love one another*". Finally we should do all in our power to maintain the unity of believers in and through the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit working in us each and every day that enables us to grow in our faith and follow Paul's guidance.

As our faith journey continues until Christ calls us home or He returns in glory, we need to live our daily lives in a manner that is worthy of Him. I commend these verses to you in the hope that you will meditate on them over the coming days and weeks.