

## **Sermon: Ephesians 4:1-15 - "A Worthy Walk"**

Preached on May 28th, 2023

Image Church, Atlanta

(Welcome and Intro myself and FTG)

Announcement: Next week we will be starting a new series for the Summer, walking through the Core Values of our church. It's going to be a time diving into the Scriptural reasons why we do what we do as a church, why we exist and what we exist to do as a church... You're not going to want to miss!

But for this weekend (Memorial Day weekend) a weekend in which we reflect and remember (as a Nation) all those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice for the freedoms we enjoy here in America, I wanted us to reflect and think about something...

And I want to jump right into it...

I want us to reflect and think about this:

**If there is a God AND that God is the God of the Bible, then what does He want from me and for my life?**

One of my favorite movies of all time is "Saving Private Ryan"  
If you haven't seen it, maybe this is a good weekend to watch it...

The movie is about a group of soldiers, led by Captain John Miller (Tom Hanks), set in 1944 in France during World War II. They are on a mission to find and extricate a soldier named James Ryan (Matt Damon) after the military finds out that his three brothers were killed in battle.

Spoiler Alert - They find him, and they rescue him. And of course, MANY die in the process, including Tom Hanks' character, John Miller.

Now, in one of the last scenes of the film there is a very powerful moment... They're on a bridge fighting the Nazi's, Captain Miller is wounded, hanging on for life and Private Ryan comes over to offer assistance and Captain Miller looks at Private Ryan and whispers in his ear with his last breath, ***"earn this."***

The scene skips ahead and through the magic of cinema shows a now elderly James Ryan and his family visiting a military Cemetery in Normandy. And they show him standing over Captain Miller's grave. And stooping down over the grave he says these words:

***"Every day I think about what you said to me that day on the bridge. I tried to live my life the best that I could. I hope that was enough. I hope that, at least in your eyes, I've earned what all of you have done for me."***

Such a gripping scene.

What I love about that scene is that Private Ryan wanted to let Captain Miller know that he didn't take his life for granted. That he lived his life as worthy as he could as a response to the sacrifice of so many who died just so that a lowly private could live.

Now the great thing about this from a Christian perspective is that UNLIKE Captain John Miller, Jesus' last words weren't "Earn this" rather, "It is finished."

So (good news alert) if you're a Christian here this morning, there is NOTHING for you to earn because Jesus has earned our salvation completely... We'll get into that more a little later.

However, even though salvation has been earned for us, that salvation DOES require a response.

(Just as Captain Miller's sacrifice required a response from Private Ryan).

Not a response, out of duty or guilt or obligation, rather out of gratitude and a new identity.

So what I want to do this morning is look at the Scriptures and see what that response should be...

Again remember the question:

**If there is a God AND that God is the God of the Bible, then what does He want from me and for my life?**

Now, I might step on some toes this morning, I might "offend," I might even come across as hypocritical. However, know that this message is just as much for ME as it is for you.

I also understand that there might be some here who don't believe that the Bible is true. If that's you, I hope that by the end of this message you'll at least doubt some of your doubts?

So anyway, let's read our passage this morning... Hear the word of the Lord:

*Ephesians 4:1-16*

*1 Therefore I, the prisoner in the Lord, urge you to walk worthy of the calling you have received, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope, at your calling—5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. 7 Now grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 For it says: When he ascended on high, he took the captives captive; he gave gifts to people., 9 But what does "he*

*ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower parts of the earth?, 10 The one who descended is also the one who ascended far above all the heavens, to fill all things.*

*11 And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God’s Son, **growing into maturity** with a stature measured by Christ’s fullness. 14 Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit.*

*15 But **speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into him who is the head—Christ.** 16 From him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building itself up in love by the proper working of each individual part.*

Let’s break this passage down a bit:

A little bit of background first on the book of Ephesians. The “book” of Ephesians, was not a book at all, it was a letter that Paul sent to the Christians in an ancient city called Ephesus.

And Paul spent the first three chapters of the letter discussing how God had created a holy community by His gift of grace, in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The members of this community had been chosen by God, adopted as sons and daughters of God, and brought near to the Father through faith in His Son. Paul explained in detail that all these people of faith, Jews and Gentiles alike, although they were “dead” in their transgressions and sins had been made alive because of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

So after laying out some theological truths about the person and work of Jesus in the first half of the book, Paul made his purpose clear: he expected that this community of faith would walk in accordance with its heavenly calling

And that’s where we find ourselves this morning (Ephesians 4:1)

In verse 1 of Chapter 4 Paul tells Christians what the response of being a Christ follower should be:

*“Walk worthy of the calling you have received”*

Other translations say

*“Walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called”*

This is similar to what Jesus said in Matthew 7:20 that a tree is known by the fruit that it bears.

The point that Paul is making in the opening statement of this chapter is that IF the truths that he'd laid out in the previous 3 chapters about Jesus are true, then there MUST be an evidential response.

In other words, Paul is saying, if we're going to call ourselves Christians, we need to act like Christ.

And then he tells us in verses 2 and 3 **HOW** he wants us to walk worthy:

- with all humility and gentleness,
- with patience, bearing with one another in love,
- making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Paul says that "walking worthy of the calling" requires a ton of love and patience.

If I can sum it up in my own words, what Paul is saying in the opening verses is this:

Walking worthy looks a lot like "living like Jesus lived, acting like Jesus acted."

So the short answer to our question this morning: **If there is a God AND that God is the God of the Bible, then what does He want from me and for my life?**

The answer is, That you would "walk worthy of the calling you've received"

In case you're wondering what you've been called to, Verses 4-6 answers it for us. It says we've been called to: *"One hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all."*

So the question is, well I'm not Jesus, what does this look like, for me?

Depending on who you ask, the answer to that question will sound very different.

Some will say that in order to walk worthy of the calling you've received, you have to read your bible, pray, fast, tithe. And all those things are GOOD. And you "should" do those things. However I think the answer to walking worthy is much simpler and it comes down to two words:

"Gospel Fluency" or "Gospel Proficiency" or better yet "Spiritual Maturity"

You see, being a Christ follower isn't "knowing a lot **ABOUT** God."

It's actually about "**KNOWING** God," specifically the Person and work of Jesus.

And more importantly it's about knowing the gospel and how to apply the gospel to every area of our lives.

Now before we go through the rest of the passage let me explain what I mean by "the gospel"

And I want to get REALLY basic here... So excuse my rudimentary language this morning. But hear me out...

According to the Bible, (Genesis, Colossians) Everything around us, "in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible... all things have been created through God and for God."

I believe the heavens and the earth are a portrait of the nature of a grand and glorious Creator.

In fact David says in Psalm 19 "The heavens declare the glory of God and the sky above proclaims his handiwork"

I don't think you can look around you and see the order of the universe, the perfect harmony between the sun, the moon, the stars and the planets and say, "that is a cool coincidence."

Do you know how much faith you have to have to NOT believe in a creator? Everything around us screams Intelligent design, order, rational beings demands a rational creator. Yet, we're being asked to believe that we're some type of Cosmic accident.

(NOTE: Book by a Christian Apologist named Frank Turek called "I don't have enough faith to be an Atheist") -highly recommend it!

I just don't have that type of faith either.

Anyway, back to our story... After creating the heavens and the earth, God chose to share this beautiful picture of Himself, with us.

He created humans, He made them in His own image, to share His good and glorious creation.

But we know the story, the Humans decided they wanted to live by their own rules and so they rebelled against their Good Creator and they chose death rather than life.

So God, rightfully so, punished them by sentencing them to death, banishing humanity from His presence, with seemingly no hope for reconciliation.

And from that point on, mankind is separated from God. He is, as the book of Ephesians says, "Dead in trespasses and sin."

Mankind had offended God, They owed God. Their very lives.

And so mankind's debt against God needed to be paid.

And just as a side note...

From that point on, God owed humanity NOTHING! He doesn't OWE you and me ANYTHING!

Yet... He chose and still chooses to communicate with us.

Back to the story,

Mankind had sinned against God. They had a debt to God that needed to be paid.

Now, there are two ways a debt can be settled.

The debt can be paid in full by the debtor or the debt can be forgiven by the one who is owed.

BUT mankind, instead of asking for forgiveness, hide in shame and blame one another for their act of disobedience.

So throughout history they try to appease God. They try to "pay their debt," if you will, by offering Him sacrifices and gifts. However the problem is that their offerings and sacrifices never truly come from a place of contrition, they come from a place of false piety and hypocrisy.

In other words, they weren't really "sorry" for their offenses. They just didn't want to be punished.

And what they didn't know is that because their nature changed (when they disobeyed in the garden), none of their sacrifices or gifts would ever suffice. Because you see, the price for offending a Good and Perfect God, could only be paid by a Good and perfect sacrifice.

In other words, a righteous God required a righteous payment.

They LOST their Good and Righteous standing with God when they disobeyed.

So clearly mankind could NOT repay the debt. Someone else would have to pay the price...

Or... God could choose to forgive them.

But here's the thing... "Forgiveness ALWAYS comes at a cost"

The (sadly) "late" Tim Keller, defines forgiveness this way: "When someone has wronged you, it means they owe you; they have a debt with you. Forgiveness is to absorb the cost of the debt yourself. You pay the price yourself, and you refuse to exact the price out of the person in any way. Forgiveness means you free the person from the penalty for a sin by paying the price yourself."

And so fast forward in time. And the Scriptures say in John 1, that the same God that spoke the universe into existence, the second person of the Trinity, "the Word of God" became flesh and dwelt among us.

(God became a man). And that man's name was Jesus.

And that man, Jesus, did what the first man, Adam couldn't.

He was tempted in every way that we were, yet, He never fell to those temptations. He lived a life of perfect and complete obedience to the will of His God and Father.

He lived a life "worthy of His calling."

But... the story doesn't stop there...

That life of perfect and complete obedience earned Him the right to be RIGHTEOUS and Holy before God. But it also made him the perfect candidate to be the one to be the righteous payment that we owed to a Righteous and Holy God.

And so rather than being commended and honored for His obedience, Jesus, God in the flesh, would be sacrificed and killed for our disobedience.

In other words, God absorbed the cost of humanity's debt by exacting payment upon His own Son so that WE might receive forgiveness.

He did that at the cross.

But the story continues.

You see if Jesus would've only given Himself up for us, that would've been noble, but it would NOT have accomplished the mission.

You see, death still prevailed. So death needed to be defeated.

And THAT was accomplished at the Resurrection.

And so although Jesus was dead, He did not remain dead. God RAISED Jesus from the dead so that death would no longer be our eternal destiny.

And in doing all of this, Jesus, the perfect God-Man (our substitute) paid the debt that we owed God, and He secured eternal life for all those who would believe in Him.

And in addition to this, God has promised to give all those who believe in Him these three things:

1st we get the forgiveness of God. All of our sins, past, present and future were transferred to

Jesus and buried. So that we have no condemnation in the sight of God. We are NO LONGER seen as sinners in God's eyes when we put our faith in Jesus.

2nd we get His righteousness. His right standing with God based on HIS life of perfect obedience is transferred to us. So that we are seen as "good." As "righteous" in God's eyes.

3rd we get His Holy Spirit. The very nature of God indwells the life of the believer so that we can overcome sin and temptation.

So when Paul tells us in the passage we read this morning that we were called to "One hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all..." This is not "WHAT" you were called to, but WHO you were called to!

Now you might be asking yourself, "what does ANY of this have to do with Spiritual Maturity? Isn't this just the basics of Christianity?"

I'm SO glad you asked.

Listen, if you KNOW, If you REALLY KNOW, If you're CONVINCED that what I just shared with you is true, you'll be able to walk worthy and ultimately live a life of peace.

Why?

Life (I'm already Good, Accepted because Jesus is Good and Accepted)

If you know that you are seen as RIGHTEOUS in God's eyes then:

- You won't feel the need to perform because you're already accepted by God
- You won't feel the need to prove yourself to Him or others
- You'll realize that your behavior is not the reason for your righteousness
- You won't beat yourself up when you fail

Death (I don't have to cover up my sins, they're already forgiven)

If you KNOW that you are TOTALLY forgiven by the God of the universe then:

- You will have NO fear of condemnation. (Not God's nor anyone else's)
- You won't condemn others because YOU'RE not condemned
- You will be able to forgive others sooner
- You won't so quick to get defensive
- You'll be able to more easily confess your sins to one another
- You won't have to hide your sins

Resurrection (Victory over sin)

If you know you have the Spirit of God then:

- You'll be able to fight temptation
- You'll learn to actually overcome sin
- You'll have patience with others



This is why week in and week out Pastor Mike says that the Gospel isn't the start of the Christian life it's the (say it with me...) "essence of the Christian life."

Just to drive this point home I want to give you a quick example of how this can play out practically:

Let's say, You're having problems with your boss at work:

There are two things that need to happen. (The very practical and the gospel application)

1st, the very practical.

Sometimes we over-spiritualize a situation and the solution might be just as simple as, you just need to get a new job.

However, then there is introspection. What's really going on here? I need to look at the situation with gospel lenses. If you're letting the person or the situation consume you, if you're harboring bitterness and hatred toward the person, then perhaps the gospel conversation you need to have with God and yourself is, "I've given this person/this job too much control over my life, I've made them a God over me. Which is idolatry. I've let them dictate my joy and contentment. My peace is dependent upon their actions and responses to my work."

The Bible says God is the source of our joy and peace. If we've let someone else take that place then we've created a false God. One that can never truly satisfy our needs.

So the gospel application in this scenario is to repent of forgetting your identity as a Child of God and to remember Jesus' life, death, resurrection.

And the prayer or conversation with God can sound a little like this:

"God, forgive me that I've given this person/this job too much control over my life, Forgive me that I've let them take your place as the source of my joy and satisfaction."

Then remember Jesus' life: "Lord thank you that the merits of Jesus' life of obedience were transferred to me. Help me to remember that I have right-standing with YOU and I don't need to prove myself beyond what I can control."

Then remember the cross:

"God, thank you for the cross which allows me to repent of my idolatry. Thank you that it reminds me that even when I feel condemned by myself and by others, I'm not condemned by you."

Remember the resurrection:

"God please give me the strength to forgive him/her because you have forgiven me and called me to forgive others as I've been forgiven."

This is what I think Paul was getting at in the passage we read earlier when he showed us “HOW” we should “walk worthy.”

- with all humility and gentleness,
- with patience, bearing with one another in love,
- making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Now, we’re not called to do this alone... And Paul reminds us of this.

*11 And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, **to build up the body of Christ**, 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God’s Son, **growing into maturity** with a stature measured by Christ’s fullness. 14 Then we will **no longer be little children**, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit. 15 But speaking the truth in love, **let us grow** in every way into him who is the head—Christ.*

Paul reminds us that the church has been established to equip the saints, to BUILD up the body. To help one another grow into maturity.

SO THAT... We won’t be like little children. So that we will be SURE and unwavering

And so we’re called to speak the truths of the gospel to one another, in love so that we can grow into Him.

I’ll close with this...

Spiritual Maturity is not about complexity, it’s about simplicity.

It’s not about reading the Bible to gain information about God.

It’s about applying what we know to be true about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus over and over and over again into every area of our lives (in love).

So that we’ll actually get to KNOW God and LOVE God and learn to respond to Him in faith and obedience out of gratitude and worship.

That’s what “walking worthy of the calling we’ve received” looks like.

And so the answer to the question we asked earlier:

**If there is a God AND that God is the God of the Bible, then what does He want from me and for my life?**

He wants you to KNOW Him. That He lived the life we couldn't live. That He died the death we should've died. That He gave us His Spirit to help us overcome sin and temptation. He wants reconciliation with you and He wants peace for you. The peace that only comes from knowing you have eternal salvation secured for you through the finished work of Jesus Christ.

If you'd like to talk to me about this I'll be down in front to talk.