

What is Your Calling?

Scripture: Ephesians 4:1-6

Introduction

Today's message is about fulfilling your calling. Do you know what your calling is? Preachers are called to preach. Missionaries are called to share the gospel with unreached people groups. Some accept the call to serve in the military. Are those the only callings? Can you be called to a specific job or career? Can you be called to serve in some way in the church? I believe you can! But, there are more important callings that each of us should accept. This passage offers *three callings* for us to consider.

A Call to Relationship

How would you explain the natural progression of a Christian life? What comes first, faith or works? Does it even matter? Paul seemed to think so. Look at the following.

Ephesians 4:1 *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of **the calling to which you have been called,***

There is one word in verse above that we should pay attention: *therefore*. What is the "there for"? The "therefore" seems to refer to the first three chapters of the letter in which Paul laid the groundwork for some essential doctrines of our faith. Like a good lawyer, Paul made the case that proper faith and proper doctrine are very important. Let us look at a couple of things from earlier in Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 1:3–4 ³ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,* ⁴ *even as **he chose us in him** before the foundation of the world, **that we should be holy and blameless before him.***

Ephesians 2:8–9, 19 ⁸ *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is **the gift of God,*** ⁹ *not a result of works, so that no one may boast...¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are **fellow citizens** with the saints and **members** of the household of God,*

The calling Paul mentioned is not to a specific ministry or a specific position within the church. It is a calling to be a *new person*, to have a new life, and to be saved from eternal damnation. Church, God has called you into a wonderful, new relationship in Jesus Christ, not because of anything you have done, but because of what Christ has done for you! God's Church is made up of those who are *called out* of the world, from darkness into light, from damnation to salvation, from the prison of sin to freedom in Christ, and from a people separated from God into a holy priesthood of believers. For God to call us out of the world to be His chosen people is the *highest calling possible*.

Therefore...because of whom you are in Christ...then...so what! What does this mean for us? Paul went from describing some essential doctrines of our faith to showing us how we should live out that faith. Believers are not called into a new relationship with God because they deserve it, but when they are called into fellowship with Christ, they should **live worthily for the Lord**. The order is critical! No one is saved because he or she is a good person or does good things. A person is saved because he or she trusts in the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ. But, after God calls us into fellowship with Him and He adopts us into His family, we ought to live in a certain way.

A Call to Walk the Walk

Proper faith should lead to proper conduct. Christians ought to live in a manner *worthy* of the relationship and holiness to which they were called. Look at verse one again.

Ephesians 4:1 *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to **walk** in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,*

Paul urged the church to live in such a way that proves they belonged to Jesus Christ. What Paul may really be saying is this: **Don't just talk the talk, but walk the walk!** He wrote a similar thing to at least three other churches. Look at the following passages.

Philippians 1:27 *Only let your manner of life be **worthy** of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,*

Colossians 1:10 *...**walk** in a manner **worthy** of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;*

1 Thessalonians 2:12 *we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to **walk** in a manner **worthy** of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.*

To **walk** means to **live** in a way that is consistent with the calling on your life. My parents used to tell me to **act my age**. Paul may be saying, "Act your faith". Behave like one who belongs to the Lord. Live your life in such a way that honors the family to which you belong - the Lord's. Don't just say you are a Christian, but act like one, too. In the movie *The Patriot*, a British Colonel named William Tavington was fighting the Revolutionary War in a very dishonorable way. When General Cornwallis summoned Tavington in response to this, he told him, "You serve me and the manner in which you serve me reflects upon me." How does our life reflect the One we serve? Do we reflect the character of Christ? What does this look like? Paul describes it in verse two.

Ephesians 4:2 *with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,*

The Christian walk should have the following characteristics:

- **Humility** - You cannot faithfully follow Christ without humility. *“To worship God is to humble everything about ourselves and exalt everything about him.”* – Bob Kauflin. If we do not enter the Kingdom of God based on our own merit, but strictly upon the grace of God, then we should be humble - humble before God and before others!
- **Gentleness** - If we are truly humble, this should be natural. We cannot be in harmony with one another if we are abrasive to each other. We should never be combative or rude to others. As God is with us, gentle and forgiving, we should be to others.
- **Patience** - In driving, patience is what I don't have for the person in front of me, and what I wish the person behind me had. We struggle to be patient with others but we want others to be patient with us. This should not be confused with indifference to sin. We ought to confront sin and exhort people to repent, but we must be patient. God is slow to anger, and so should we.
- **Love** - Love is the defining characteristic of God's people, the Church. It is, after all, the greatest commandment. But it is not always easy. Paul used the word “bearing with one another”. There is a sense of having to endure it. But, as Christ loved us when we were unlovable, so should we love each other, even when it hurts.

All of these virtues—humility, gentleness, patience, and love—were displayed in Christ's own character. Therefore, they should be evident in the daily walk of those who follow Him. Basically, Paul urges us to let the Fruit of the Spirit be seen in our lives so as to prove that we truly belong to God (Galatians 5:16). In other words: *Act like you belong to Jesus and are a child of the King of kings!*

A Call to Oneness

So far, this passage has reminded us of our calling in Christ. It has also indicated the practical outworking of truly being in fellowship with God through Christ. We will walk the Christian walk by demonstrating the behavior of Christ towards one another. But, there is actually one other characteristic of the Christian walk. Look at verse three.

Ephesians 4:3 *eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

The Holy Spirit is not a cause of contentiousness, for He binds His people together in peace. In Christ, we have a peace with God, but we should also have a peace with each other. Peace is a state of reconciliation and love and therefore acts as a bond to unite believers in Christ. Peace is vital for the health of the body of Christ. The Spirit is called the “bond” of that peace. He is literally the *cement* that binds people together.

Note: *We do not create unity in the Church. God did! We are to preserve the unity God has already established. We are to be “eager to maintain” the unity. We are to be zealous to preserve the unity of the church without sacrificing the purity of truth.*

Are you eager to maintain the unity in God's church? Are you eager to maintain a sense of oneness with your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ? What about those that are not a part of this fellowship, your sister churches? Are you eager to maintain a Christian oneness with them, a cooperation and sense of solidarity with them? We should be. The basis of our Christian life together, of the Church's unity is the oneness of God. Look at the next few verses.

Ephesians 4:4–6 ⁴ *There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—* ⁵ *one Lord, one faith, one baptism,* ⁶ *one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

Verses four through six form what could be an early creed, perhaps an ancient Christian statement of faith. The word “one” permeates this section, as if to explain God's call for unity in the church. *Oneness* defines God, therefore, oneness ought to define His Church! Paul provides a *sevenfold* basis for this Christian oneness.

One Body - This means at least two things. You are all part of the same body of Christ and individually members of it (c.f. Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31). Therefore, take care of the other parts of the local Body. But, there is also only one church, not many! How can this be? I passed many churches on the way here. Surely Paul was also aware of all the various churches, many that he had planted. There is the visible church and the invisible church. The visible church may meet in different locations, but the invisible church is the **one Body of Christ**. This means we are *not in competition* with one another. All churches that serve Christ are part of the same kingdom of God!

One Spirit - Just as a human body has one spirit that gives it life, so Christ's body, the Church, is enlivened by one Holy Spirit. The Spirit links us to Christ, dwells within us and joins us together as a body. It is in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit that the unity of the body of Christ is guaranteed.

One Hope - Christians do not have separate “hopes” but are together called to eternal life and to enjoy God forever in resurrection glory. There is no hope outside of Jesus Christ. Our one hope is the triumph of Jesus, as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

One Lord - Jesus is Lord! The church belongs to Him! A church is not ruled by pastors, deacons or other people in the church. A church is ruled by King Jesus. He alone has all authority (Matthew 28:18). A church that removes Jesus from His throne has ceased to function as a church. Christ alone is Lord. Period!

One Faith - This refers to the doctrinal truths Christians commonly confess. Churches may disagree about some of the finer points of that faith, but there is only one apostolic faith which has been delivered once and for all. Jesus Christ crucified!!!

One Baptism - This could refer to water baptism. While Christians have disagreed about the proper mode of baptism, they do agree that God commands it. This may also refer to the baptism of all believers into one body, which is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit. Water baptism is an outward sign of the inward transformation of one becoming in Christ as the result of being *immersed* in the Holy Spirit.

One God and Father - The ultimate unity is found in the character of God Himself: one God and Father of all. God is the Creator of everything and He is the One from whom everything exists. He has absolute supremacy. He is over everything. People do not worship different Gods. They either worship God or they do not.

Based on the oneness of God, there is a profound spiritual unity of all genuine believers who are “in Christ”, founded on “one faith” in “one Lord,” irrespective of our minor differences. Paul demonstrates that God is bringing people from different backgrounds, nations and languages and is building them into one body, the universal Church of Jesus Christ. God’s calls us to maintain the unity on this side of eternity based on the truth of one God, one Lord, one faith, and Jesus’ one work of salvation.

Conclusion

So, what does all this mean for us? How should we respond to these callings?

First, have you responded to the **call to accept Christ** and become a child of God? Are you a member of God’s Church? I do not mean whether your name is on the church’s membership roll, but are you on God’s membership roll? Have you responded to the Holy Spirit and have you trusted in Jesus as your only Way to salvation. Have you confessed Him as Lord and Savior? If not, you can respond to that call today!

Second, if you have responded to the call of God to follow Jesus, are you living in a way that honors Christ? Are you living in a way that represents the King of kings well? Are you **walking the walk**, or just talking the talk? In what ways might God be telling you to walk better in Christ: *humility, gentleness, patience, love, peace*? Are those any areas you need help to grow? The Spirit is there to convict and to empower His people to become more like Christ.

Thirdly, how well do you represent the **oneness of God**? Is there disunity within this church? Satan loves to create discord in Jesus’ church, because if we are not together, then we are not on mission for Jesus. Are you eager to maintain the unity of Spirit in this congregation? With your sister churches? Is there someone you need to reconcile with? Is there pride, anger, hatred, or jealousy that is hindering the unity?

Jesus paid a high price that none of us could afford in order to purchase us and make us His own. Are you fulfilling your calling to belong to Christ and to make Him known through your life? May the Holy Spirit convict us, bring us to repentance, and draw us closer to Christ. Amen!