

Our Calling

A Full Expository Sermon Outline • TheSermonOutline.com

Key Scripture

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

Sermon in One Sentence

As God's redeemed people, we are called to live purposeful lives that reflect the holy nature and redemptive mission of Christ.

Introduction

Have you ever received a truly important phone call, perhaps a call that changed the trajectory of your life? Maybe it was a call about a job offer, a significant health update, or news from a loved one far away. The ringing of the phone carries an urgency, a summons that demands our attention, for we know that what awaits on the other end is not trivial, but weighty. In a similar, yet infinitely more profound way, God has issued a "call" to every believer – a divine summons that defines our identity and reorients our entire existence.

Yet, in the clamor of daily life, it's all too easy to lose sight of this profound calling. We get caught up in the mundane, the urgent, the trivial, and slowly but surely, our lives begin to drift from the high purpose for which we were redeemed. We might unintentionally start living as if we were still uncalled, unchosen, and uncommissioned.

Today, we turn to the Apostle Paul's powerful exhortation in Ephesians 4:1, where he urges us to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called." This isn't just a suggestion; it's a profound directive for all who bear the name of Christ. What exactly does this divine call entail, and how do we ensure our daily walk aligns with such an extraordinary summons?

Historical & Biblical Context

The Epistle to the Ephesians is a profound theological treatise, penned by the Apostle Paul during his imprisonment (likely in Rome, around 60-62 AD). It was addressed to the church in Ephesus, a significant metropolitan center known for its diverse cultures and the imposing Temple of Artemis. After spending the first three chapters articulating the majestic doctrines of God's redemptive work in Christ – the mystery of Jew and Gentile united in one body, the immeasurable riches of God's grace, and the spiritual blessings poured out upon believers – Paul transitions in chapter 4 from doctrine to duty, from truth to application. Having established the glorious "who we are" in Christ, he now moves to the crucial "how we should live" because of who we are. His imprisonment lends weight to his words; he urges them from a place of sacrifice, demonstrating the very commitment he calls them to embody. To the Ephesians, and indeed to us, he is

saying, "Because you have been called to such an incredible salvation, now live accordingly."

Main Point I — Called to Unity: Our Posture of Humility

Scripture: Ephesians 4:2-3 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Paul begins his exhortation on worthy living by immediately emphasizing unity, recognizing that the health of the church, and thus the effectiveness of its witness, hinges upon it. The virtues he lists – humility, gentleness, patience, and loving forbearance – are not mere suggestions for good manners; they are the foundational attitudes, the spiritual posture, that makes genuine unity possible within the diverse body of Christ. Humility is the antidote to pride, which fuels division; gentleness softens our interactions, preventing harshness; patience allows us to endure others' shortcomings, and bearing with one another in love means actively choosing to overlook offenses and extend grace.

These virtues are not naturally occurring in the human heart; they are cultivated by the Holy Spirit as we commit ourselves to Christ. Paul isn't asking us to *create* unity, but to be "eager to *maintain* the unity of the Spirit." The Spirit has already united us in Christ (Ephesians 2:14-16), forging one new humanity from disparate backgrounds. Our calling, therefore, includes the solemn responsibility to guard and cherish this divine accomplishment, not allowing our personal preferences, cultural differences, or theological disagreements to fracture the bond of peace that Christ himself has established. Our walk is worthy of our calling when it consistently expresses the humble, patient love that preserves the church's unity, reflecting the unified nature of the Triune God.

Main Point II — Called to Identity: Our Foundation in Christ

Scripture: Ephesians 4:4-6 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.

Having established the manner of our walk (humility and love for unity), Paul now grounds this call in the unshakeable truth of our shared identity in Christ. He provides a theological bedrock, repeating the word "one" seven times to underscore the singular, unified reality of Christian existence. This isn't just about striving for relational harmony; it's about recognizing that our spiritual reality is profoundly singular. We belong to "one body," the church, animated by "one Spirit." We share "one hope" in Christ's return and our eternal inheritance. We submit to "one Lord," Jesus Christ, confess "one faith" in Him, and have been initiated into this new life through "one baptism." Above all, we serve "one God and Father of all," who sovereignly reigns "over all," actively works "through all," and intimately dwells "in all" believers.

This seven-fold summary of Christian identity serves as a powerful reminder of what defines us and binds us together. Our calling is not to invent our purpose or to choose our own spiritual path; it is to embrace and live out the reality of who God has already made us to be in Christ. When we understand that our identity is so profoundly rooted in these "ones," it shapes our entire perspective. It encourages us to prioritize what unites us over what divides us, to live with confidence in our shared Redeemer, and to find our ultimate belonging not in earthly allegiances but in the universal family of God. Our worthiness flows from this deep,

divinely established, and unified identity, making our walk a testimony to this glorious truth.

Main Point III — Called to Maturity: Our Contribution to Growth

Scripture: Ephesians 4:7, 12-13 But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift... to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 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.

While our calling emphasizes unity and a shared identity, Paul also clarifies that this does not imply uniformity of gifting or an absence of individual purpose. In verse 7, he declares that "grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift." This highlights divine diversity within the divine unity. Every single believer has received a spiritual gift or enablement from Christ, not for selfish indulgence, but for the edification of the entire body. The subsequent verses (which include the listing of apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers) elaborate on how Christ provides equipped leaders "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." This means the pastor's role is not to *do* all the ministry, but to *prepare* the congregation to do the work of ministry.

The ultimate goal of this equipping and ministry is comprehensive spiritual maturity: "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." This incredible vision casts maturity not merely as individual growth, but as collective growth, where the entire church reaches its full potential, individually and corporately reflecting the very character and completeness of Christ Himself. Our calling, therefore, propels us towards spiritual growth, both personally and as a community, leveraging our unique gifts to contribute to the greater good, ensuring that our lives are not stagnant but actively engaged in the ongoing process of becoming more like Christ.

Illustration

Consider the story of the great sculptor Michelangelo. He once remarked, when asked how he carved such magnificent statues from stone, "I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free." For Michelangelo, the angel was already there, hidden within the rough, unrefined block. His calling was to see its potential and then labor to remove everything that obscured its true form. In a powerful parallel, God has called us, His people, by grace and through Christ. He sees in us the "angel," the image of His Son, yet it often lies obscured by sin, self-interest, and spiritual immaturity. Our calling is to, like the sculptor, actively partner with the Holy Spirit, embracing the virtues of humility and love, owning our unified identity in Christ, and diligently engaging our gifts and growth. It's a continuous process of allowing God to chip away at what is not Christ-like, until the true form of our redeemed identity is fully revealed, to His glory.

Practical Application

1. Prayerfully identify one area of pride or self-interest: Reflect on your interactions this week and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any area where pride hinders your relationships or participation in the church. Confess it and seek to replace it with humility and gentleness, specifically toward someone you find

challenging.

2. Reaffirm your identity in "the One": Spend time in prayer and meditation on Ephesians 4:4-6 daily this week. Journal how each "one" (one body, one Spirit, one Lord, etc.) profoundly defines your identity and shapes your perspective on life.

3. Actively seek to use your spiritual gifts for someone else: Identify a practical way you can serve another member of your church or community this week, using a gift God has given you (e.g., offering encouragement, hospitality, practical help, teaching, listening).

4. Initiate a conversation for unity: If you are aware of disunity or tension within your church or a relationship, prayerfully consider how you can be an agent of reconciliation and peace, remembering your calling to "maintain the unity of the Spirit."

Discussion Questions

1. How does understanding our "calling" as a divine summons change your perspective on everyday life and responsibilities?

2. Why do you think Paul began his practical exhortations on worthy living with humility, gentleness, patience, and love? Which of these do you find most challenging to embody?

3. How does Paul's seven-fold emphasis on "one" (Ephesians 4:4-6) challenge individualism within the church, and what practical implications does this have for how we relate to other believers?

4. In what concrete ways do you believe your spiritual gifts are meant to equip others or build up the body of Christ towards maturity (Ephesians 4:12-13)?

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the high and holy calling You have placed upon our lives through Christ Jesus. Forgive us when we lose sight of its immense privilege and profound responsibility. Empower us by Your Holy Spirit to walk in a manner truly worthy of this calling, demonstrating humility, preserving unity, living out our shared identity, and growing into the fullness of Christ. May our lives be a testament to Your glorious redemption. Amen.

Benediction

Now go, beloved of God, and walk in the worthiness of your calling, demonstrating the unity, identity, and maturity of Christ, as you live for His glory.