

Lamar E. Cooper, Sr.
Interim President
Executive Vice President & Provost
Criswell College

From Doctrine to Duty

Ephesians 4:1-6

Introduction

Chapters 1 through 3 place emphasis on doctrine. Specifically they lay out what God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit have committed to do for all believers. These three chapters tell us who and what we are in Christ. Now we move from being to doing, from doctrine to duty. Actually there are two extremes by which many believers try to live. First, some seek knowledge of the Word, but they do not apply the Word in their daily lives. They are knowledge and wisdom collectors, but there is no interest in performance. Second, some are more concerned about experience and performance, but they have no concern for doctrine. In their lives whatever seems good is considered the right way and the demands of Scripture are considered irrelevant, and therefore are ignored.

In the letter to the Ephesians and the churches of Asia Minor, Paul clearly seeks to affirm that there must be a balance between doctrine and duty. One's walk is weakened if the emphasis is all on performance and on experience. There is no clear biblical mandate for doing the work of God without the control of doctrine. Our walk must have the control of doctrine and doctrine must pervade our preaching and teaching of the Word. We must proclaim the doctrines of Scripture and seek to walk according to their precepts.

Importantly, our walk will reflect our relationship with Christ! This is a key concept in the New Testament that often goes unnoticed. Experiencing salvation and knowing Christ as Savior and Lord demands that we act like His disciples, see Col 3:1. The New Testament word for disciple is *mathetes*, and it refers to one who is "taught" or "trained" in order to perform. It is related to our concept of discipline, hence the translation "disciple," meaning "a person under discipline."

Here is some of what we have available to us in Christ: our position is that we are dead to sin, alive to God, forgiven, accepted in the beloved, children of God, joint heirs with Christ, blessed with all spiritual blessings, servants of God and Christ, cleansed, blameless, secure, peaceful, filled with joy, recipients of grace, one in fellowship, indwelled by the Spirit, saved, sanctified, and destined for our home in heaven, to name a few. Paul's point, therefore, is how shall we then live? If you are a follower of Christ, then live like it!!!

I. **The Mandate of the Worthy Walk, 4:1**

1. The basis for the worthy walk, 1a - "Therefore," 4:1a; see Phil 1:27; Col 1:9-14; 1 Thess 2:10-12; 4:1-2. Paul's "beseech" as in Rom 12:1 is an "exhortation" for them to walk with Christ, cf. Rom 12:1.
2. The message of the worthy walk, 1b - Greek *peripateo*, "to walk." The verb tense in Greek (aorist) marks a point in time when there is a change. It refers to a point of new beginning. "Walk" is an Old Testament concept based on the Hebrew word *halak*, "to walk." see Ps 1:1ff; Gen 17:1; Exod 18:18-20; Deut 5:1-21, 33; 10:12-13. "Walk" in Scripture sometimes has a literal meaning, to ambulate or move on your feet. But, in the spiritual sense it refers to your conduct through life.
3. The call of the worthy walk, 1c - We appropriate what we have been given by Christ, Col 2:1-7. As a believer our "walk" should be such that we bring honor to Christ by the way we live, work, talk, act, and think.

II. **The Seven Characteristics of the Worthy Walk, 4:2-3**

1. Walk in humility - "lowliness" refers to walking with a spirit of humility. The spirit of humility is commended in Scripture, see Isa 57:15; Prov 22:4; Zeph 2:3; 3:12; Rom 12:16; Col 3:12; 2 Tim 1:16; Jas 4:12; 1 Pet 5:5-6; Titus 3:1-5.
2. Walk in gentleness - gentleness is not meekness or weakness, but resolves to do the right things in the right way. Jesus was humble and gentle, but He chased the Jews who had transformed the Temple into a "den of thieves," Matt 11:29; Ps 18:35; 1 Cor 4:21; Gal 5:23; Phil 4:5; 1 Tim 6:11.
3. Walk with patience - this kind of patience refers to a willingness and a commitment to persevere, Rom 15:5; 1 Thess 1:3; 1 Tim 6:11; Heb 6:12; Jas 1:3-4; 5:10; Rev 1:9; 13:10.
4. Walk with endurance - "longsuffering" means to bear up under adversity. It is like Job's endurance through multiple trials without breaking, see Ps 100:5; 117:2; 1 Cor 3:14; 2 Tim 2:3; Heb 12:1; Jas 1:12; 5:11; 1 Pet 1:25 (cf. Isa 40:8).
5. Walk in love - The Greek *agape*, is well known as unqualified and unrestrained love. Here it qualifies how we are to endure. We are to endure one another in love. Sharing trials, difficulties, heartaches, disappointment, and at the same time loving those who may even be the source of these issues. It is a godly toleration that accepts those who may be a source of irritation and pain. "Bearing one another in love."
6. Walk in oneness - Greek *spoudazo*, "endeavoring" or making every effort to keep and preserve something that already exists - in this case, it is the unity of the Spirit. We can't arrange unity, we only can "keep" it! This is zeal that makes every effort to see a person, an idea, or a plan through to conclusion, Ps 133:1; Eph 4:3, 13.
7. Walk in the Spirit & Bond of Peace - Greek *sundesmos*, something that binds together. In this case, it is unity of the Spirit that is preserved

(held together like the sinews hold our bones), see Col 3:12-17, esp v. 14. We must make every effort and seek to self-sacrificially preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

III. The Sevenfold Unity of the Worthy Walk, 4:4-6

This passage is antithetical to the radical pluralism of our day. Pluralism is belief in many gods, many means of grace, many elements of belief. But here we find a sevenfold unity, a sevenfold oneness. Ephesians really does set Christianity apart from Islam, Buddhism, Shintoism, Hinduism, Mormonism, pantheism, etc. The sevenfold use of "one" places a special emphasis on unity. The basis for unity is verses 1-3. It is no longer Jews and Gentiles, but as stated clearly in 2:14-22, now we all are fellow citizens, 2:19. These seven elements bring together all that has been presented in chapters 1-3.

1. One body - Greek *soma*, refers to a human body which is the universal church, all true believers as presented in 1:23; 2:16; 3:5-6.
2. One Spirit - Greek *pneuma*, those reconciled to Christ have access to God in one Spirit who indwells believers as the Temple of God, 2:14-22.
3. One hope - Greek *elpis*, is the eager expectation of believers for the working out of God's plan for the ages in 2:11-3:13; Col 1:5; Rom 8:24-25.
4. One Lord - Greek *kurios*, Lord. Paul commonly uses this term to refer to Jesus Christ, Acts 2:36; 10:36; 16:31; 19:17, 1 Cor 8:5-6; 12:3.
5. One faith - Greek *pistis*, refers to the act of receiving Christ by making a commitment and trusting only Him obediently in all aspects of life.
6. One baptism - Greek *baptisma*, refers to the rite of immersion, which was a public profession of faith by believers in the first century, and it is celebrated today in that way, Rom 6:1-6.
7. One God and Father of all - Greek *theos* and *patar*, both are *Yahweh* of the Old Testament and Jesus of the New Testament, Rom 15:6; 1 Cor 15:24; 2 Cor 1:3; 11:31; Gal 1:4; Phil 4:20; Jas 1:27. He is the one and only God and Father of all true believers, Rom 8:9. God is not in every human being, but He inhabits the life of every human believer, i.e. "in all of us" believers. This is the point made in Ephesians 3:17.

Note: Two things are important to see in this section. (1) The Trinity is an integral part of this passage of Scripture. (2) The order of the reference to the Trinity here is Spirit, Lord (Jesus), and God the Father. This order is in keeping with the theme of the passage, which is the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," v. 3, see also in 1 Cor 12:4-6, Paul used the same order in discussing the gifts of the Spirit. There is no particular special significance to this inverted order.