

Isaac Bennett  
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Forerunner Church  
Walking Worthy of the Calling – Ephesians 4

We're going to do part two of the message that I gave about three weeks ago, which seems like eternity past on Ephesians 4. And so, just a minute of review. That last message was on Ephesians 3, and we looked at, specifically verse 19 of Ephesians 3, so you can look back there just for a moment.

What I'm gonna share this morning essentially just builds upon that which Paul speaks of in Ephesians 3, specifically in regards to the fullness of God that is available to us through Christ. Now, Paul, in Ephesians 3:19, he summarizes what the fullness of God looks like for the believer. And you can read along here in 3:19. He says to "know the love of Christ," but look back at verse 18. He says, "that you would comprehend with all the saints to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God." And so, in essence, what Paul is saying in his Ephesians 3 point that he's making here is that there is a corporate experience and understanding of the affections of God that are available to us. Notice that I said the word "corporate".

Now, for us westerners, sometimes that can be a hard idea to imagine. We don't typically think in terms of corporate family. We think often very individualistically. Jesus came, He died for my sins so that I could live with Him forever. And Paul begins to broaden my Gentile view and begins to expand my understanding of what it means to encounter the fullness of God and to walk in the fullness of God. And he says that "you would with all the saints know" or experience "the affections of Jesus' heart, of God's heart towards us." And this is how Paul defines the fullness of God, which is very interesting.

It's interesting because we live in a prayer culture where we're contending in prayer and have for many years for God to release His power and His presence and revival here and in the nations of the earth. And we will never continue, you know, we will never stop to do that until He comes in the sky or we go to be with Him or whatever.

But often when I think of the fullness of God, I imagine that it's about the power of God and signs and wonders, that it's about every sick body being healed in the meeting, that it's about every blind eye opening. And you know, we have promises that were even given over this house prophetically by the Lord that there would be a day where no disease known to man would stand before this people. And we have these glorious promises of breakthrough and power in the preaching of the Word, and healing, and deliverance, and all these things. And I'm not saying that those things aren't good things by any measure. I'm saying that when Paul defines "the fullness of God," he says that's when the body of Christ comprehends and experiences the affections of the Lord. Very different.

And interestingly, there are passages in Scripture like Matthew chapter 7, for example, that talk about those that stand before Christ at the judgement seat. They say, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name and do signs and wonders in Your name and do all these different

things?" And the Lord's rebuke to them is, "Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness. I never knew you."

And so, what we surmise is that the fullness of God is not just the power of God in the outward sense, that it's not just power, signs and wonders, miracles, the multiplying of bread and loaves and fish. But the fullness of God is when we are able to fully enjoy God and He fully enjoys us. Do you know you can live your life without doing any miraculous sign or wonder without raising the dead and you get in? You get into the Kingdom. Isn't that good news?

Now, John the Baptist, to our knowledge, he didn't perform any huge miracles, signs and wonders, healing, deliverance, resurrection from the dead. He didn't do that. That wasn't the quality that he was known for. Jesus says, "he is the greatest man ever born of a woman." I think it's because John touched some of the depths of the affection of God's heart and experienced what we understand do be part of the fullness of God.

Now, the Lord spoke to this community several times over the years, over the last 30-40 years, and He said this phrase, and you probably heard it before. That we were to proclaim Zechariah 4 unto Ephesians 4, and this is where the Lord was taking us. And so, we're gonna look at just the first part of Ephesians 4 and maybe some invitation of how the Lord is inviting us deeper as a community. I've been very challenged looking at this verse, these couple verses here over the last few weeks in preparation of this. And I'm feeling conviction, and I hope to share that conviction with you.

Let's look at it. Ephesians 4 in verse 1. Paul says this first phrase, "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you." "Therefore I." Now, what Paul's doing here, he's going to begin to connect together the glorious doctrines of the Gospel that we find in the first three chapters of the book of Ephesians with the practical's of Christian living, or the Christian walk of the following three chapters.

The book of Ephesians is 6 chapters long, and it's divided nearly almost in half, but not exactly precisely. But it's divided nearly in half, and the first three chapters take us on this rollercoaster of the heights of the revelation of the knowledge of God and the depths of His affection and I mean, it is a roller coaster ride. If you want to get lost somewhere, jump into Ephesians 1, 2, and 3.

And essentially what Paul does in the first half of the book, he shows us how salvation has been worked into us by the work of Christ and how we have fellowship with God and we're reconciled with Him and He tells us through Ephesians 1, 2, and 3, that now we share in this glorious fellowship with the Godhead not because of our works, but because of Christ's work on the cross. It's the grace of God. And it's the revelation of the grace of God in us.

Now, what Paul's gonna do in Ephesians 4, 5, and 6, is he's going to show how the grace of God must not remain just an understanding. It must not just remain in our intellect. It's not just doctrine and books and hours chasing experiences in God, but rather those truths are to be worked out and walked out in us. And the apostle longs to see the people of God walking out those truths with power unto a hundred percent obedience in Christ.

Paul uses this first word "therefore" in essence to link together the doctrine of the Gospel with the practice of the Gospel. He doesn't say "but" or any other kind of word that would tie them together. He says, "Therefore." In other words, these two predominant ideas, the doctrine, which is the belief of God and the practice of our faith, the Christian walk, would be forever linked together and they could not be, and they should not be ever separated from one another. They depend on one another.

And first, of course, like we see in the book of Ephesians, first the apostle leads with the belief about God, who God is and what He's done in us, and then secondly, He connects it to, who now we are and how we ought to live in light of these glorious realities and truths.

We must always remember that the Gospel of Christ is both doctrine and practice. And we want to resist falling too much into one camp or it being insistent or dogmatic about one camp and not the other. And you find Christians throughout the earth that equally, one group goes, "We're just about the knowledge of God and the experience that we get in God." And another group just says, "We'll just make it practical. Just tell me what to do. How should I do it?"

And this word "therefore," it's just one word that Paul uses right here at the beginning of verse one. It's just so important because it forever links together these two realities. We must have an understanding of God through doctrine in order to know what to do, and knowing what to do must flow out of that same understanding of who we are in Christ, who He has made us, and what He has called us to do as we live a life before Him of obedience.

Some people think that it's fashionable or whatever to do away with one and just do the other. There's a whole group of individuals that have extremely bright intellects. I mean, they are very intelligent people, and they really wanna give themselves to the doctrine of the Word. And then there's another group that really wants to just do the practical's of Christianity, but they're not really concerned with doctrine. And the truth of the matter is, is that we must be equally concerned with both, as we're gonna see here, in what Paul exhorts us to do and what, I believe, Christ, Himself calls us to do. To believe and then bear the fruits of repentance, to hear the Word of God, allow the Word of God to change us, and then allow the Word of God to spill out of us, to receive the grace of God and then turn and give that grace away to the people that are around us.

One of the greatest criticisms of Christianity has to be hypocrisy in that who we believe in and what we believe in often doesn't translate into what we say and what we do. And in ignoring the importance of Christian practice or the second half of the book of Ephesians, just to put it real simply, we actually bring dishonor to the name of Christ and His glory. By espousing the truths, the doctrinal truths of, He saved me, He washed me in His blood, I'm redeemed to God, I've been justified by the cross and the work of the cross, and then to turn and exemplify the behaviors of the world in wrath, in malice, in lust, in anger, in bitterness, or just being cranky, and just being unkind to people, actually bring shame and dishonor to the name of Christ in doing that. You don't want to do that.

This word, "therefore", that Paul uses, joins together this idea of what we believe and what we do. This is what James talks about in James chapter two. I'll read it to you. James chapter two verse 20. "But do you want to know, o foolish man, that faith without works is dead." Verse 26, "For as the body is dead without the spirit, so faith without works is dead also." What James is saying is this, that you can believe the glorious truths of doctrine and the heights of Christian belief.

You can go sit in the prayer room for hours and get lost in the mystery and the power and the beauty of God, but if it doesn't touch your life when you walk out of your prayer time, if it doesn't touch your life when you walk out of your study time or your devotion time, or your twenty minutes of K-Love on the way to work if it doesn't affect your employees that work, you know, as co-laborers, if it doesn't affect your marriage, your spouse, your children, then your faith is dead. And that's what James is telling us. He's warning us against that.

Now, our works, the good works that we do, do not earn us salvation. We are only recipients of the saving grace of God because of the works of Christ. But when that reality is born within us, we're born again, we're regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the work of the cross, there is an inevitable outcome where that life must, it must spring out of us and touch the lives of the people that we come in contact with.

These understandings of the doctrines of God and the truth of God's Word, it is essential that they affect the way that we spend our money. It is essential that they express and affect the way that we express our sexuality. It's essential that it affects our marriage and our parenting and all of these things because we don't want to stand before the Lord and Him say to us, "Your faith is dead." We want to be alive in Him.

John Calvin said it like this. He said, "Man is saved by grace through faith alone, but faith must not remain alone." It must not remain just as faith, as understanding and belief in Christ. It must affect our behavior and change the way that we think and the way that we act. This is the glorious process of transformation that the Gospel has in our lives. The more we mature in the Lord, the more the truths of Scripture bear down upon our actions. And we want it to affect our speech and our behavior, and our interactions, lest we bring shame and dishonor to the name of Christ. We want to endeavor to this.

This is why Paul exhorts the church to walk worthy of the Lord. This is not to be something that's taken lightly. In essence, our walk before Him as we take the truths of the cross and we apply them to our life, actually, as a matter of fact, Paul is seen praying earnestly, fervently, and unceasingly for this reality to be real in the church in the New Testament. In both Colossians and Thessalonians, he says that "I'm praying without ceasing that you would walk worthy of the calling." In other words, that you would translate the truth of the Gospel of Christ into your daily lives, and the apostle is so gripped by this reality. He sees the tension. He feels the burden of it, and he says, "This is not just something we take for granted. This is something that I am contending for in my own life, and I'm contending for in your lives to see you walk in a manner that's worthy of the cross, in a way that's worthy of the Lord."

The Lord did not just save us so that we would swim around in the truths of His Word and just kind of get lost and get put on our own island. It's not so that we would experience the affection of His heart and just lock ourselves in some bedroom or some castle or prayer closet or cave, and then just spend our whole existence just being there. But rather, listen to this verse, Titus 2 verses 13-14. He says this, "Looking for the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." Okay? That's the day of the Lord. Verse 14, "He gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from every lawless deed." That is the doctrine of salvation. His blood has redeemed you. It's purchased you from the power of sin and death. Hallelujah.

And then listen to this. He says that "He would purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works." We don't remain in the day of the Lord alone. We don't remain in the truths of our redemption alone, but those things bear down upon us and they give birth to what? Zealous good works in Christ.

Now, being good Protestants that we are, we often don't emphasize the necessity and the power of good works. I think that we miss something in that regard. I just want to set the record clear again. I'm not talking about good works unto salvation. I'm talking about good works as the fruit of salvation. I'm talking about living a life of holiness and obedience to God, wholehearted obedience.

Do you have a vision that the truth of the Gospel would bring forth out of you, wholehearted obedience? I'm talking about obedience in every area of life, that we would stand before the Lord in our maturity in Him without blame and above reproach in every single area. Most Christians don't even believe that's attainable. Most people say, "Well, you know, you can try to go for that, but you're really not ever gonna get it." And I want to challenge that idea. Why? Why do we have a lower or diminished view of walking in good works and wholehearted obedience before God? Why do we minimize the outcome of the Gospel as it bears down upon our life? What are we afraid of? We're either afraid of coming up short or we're afraid that the Gospel, the grace of God isn't going to be enough, that we'll disappoint Him. But if we don't aim for wholehearted obedience in our lives, in every area of our lives, speech, conduct, thought, then we will certainly fall short of wholehearted obedience. If we don't get a vision for, "I want to love You with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my strength and all my mind," if you don't get a vision for that and go, "That's what I'm going for," then we will certainly come up short.

Do you know why? Because it's setting the finish line a mile short of where it's supposed to be. You're running a race, a race that calls for endurance, a race that is rigorous before God, and if you imagine that the finish line is 2 or 3 miles before the finish line really is, then you will, every time, come up short of the finish line.

The Lord calls us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. He calls us to bear forth the fruits of the Spirit, to be kind and gentle and generous. In that sense, everything that Christ has given to us, we're called to demonstrate to the world and give away to the people around us. There's not one thing that Christ has given us that we are allowed to or meant to withhold from another individual. Why do we withhold joy and celebration over another person's victories? Why do we withhold mercy? Why do we withhold grace? Why do we withhold affection and encouragement and rejoicing? God does not withhold these things from us. He lavished them,

lavishes them upon us. It's called, Paul calls it, the riches of His grace. He has made us rich to God, and He's made us so that we could bring others into that richness so that what has freely been given to us, we can freely give away to others. You've freely forgiven me of all my sins. None of them remain. I will freely forgive those around me of all their sins, not letting one remain.

If Christ were to allow one, just one of our baby sins, you know, a lie, an impure thought. If He were to allow it to remain outside of His blood and His forgiveness, and the power of His mercy, that one sin would damn us to eternal suffering in hell. How much more should we extend the riches of His grace to those that mistreat us, to those that have maligned us, to those that have used us, to those that have spoken evil of us? In other words, what we receive, we must give away. Not because of duty, but because of joy. There's such joy and satisfaction and delight in being a recipient of the riches of the Gospel of Christ. And it is our joy to freely give those things away, to be like Christ, to speak like Him, to pray like Him, to think well like He thinks well of others, to serve the poor, to give of our earthly possessions. This is what He's called us to.

He goes on and says, "Because of this, therefore, I want you to walk in a manner that is worthy of your calling in Christ." I want you to walk in a manner that is worthy. We're gonna look at some of these ideas. The Christian walk is that which God expects of us as we've become recipients of His grace and of His power. The walk is how you hash it out. The walk is how you take the truths of God and the riches of His grace and you apply them to your life. How do you apply them to your speech? How do you apply them to money? How do you apply them to sexuality? How do you apply them to power and influence and leadership? How do you apply them to serving?

Paul esteemed this idea of walking worthy. I mentioned earlier that he prayed increasingly for it to take root in the heart of Christians. I'll just read this one verse on this point. Colossians 1:9-10, "For this reason since the day we heard it, we do not cease to pray for you." He's praying unceasingly for this church, for the people of God. And He says, "I'm asking that you would be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding." That's the doctrine, the truths of God. That's the mountain peaks of our faith. That we would be filled over and over and over with wisdom and spiritual understanding, that we would comprehend what it is that God has done, what He's like.

And then he goes on, verse 10. He goes, "I want you to understand those things so that you would walk worthy of the Lord and be fully pleasing to Him." See, he joins together the revelation of God with how we walk out the revelation of God. He doesn't separate the two. He doesn't just say, "Oh, just receive the wisdom and the glory and the inheritance and go on your merry way." He says, "No. The glory of His inheritance and what He's done in us and to us is meant to manifest through us and everything that we are must come under His leadership and His sovereign rule as God." Because He's not just Messiah who saves us from our sins. He's Lord, and He requires our allegiance and obedience to Him. He's not just the God that pats us on the back and sends us on our way so that we go enjoy our lives. He says, "No." The confession of Peter in Matthew 16 is, "You are the Son of God. You're not just saving me from my sins. You are the God enthroned at the center of the universe, and everything that exists, exists for You and to You and through You. It's all about You at the center."

And the Christian always endeavors, in every area of their lives, to put Christ at the center. And we have conflict and pain and difficulty and sin and things we're working around in our life. And there's a great need for us to go into those areas and put Christ and His cross at the center. How do You see this area of my life? What do You ask of me? I'm fully submitted to You.

I love what Paul refers to himself as. He says, "I'm a prisoner of the Lord." Now, most commentators are saying, "Well, he's likely writing the book of Ephesians from prison," which is likely true, but Paul had an understanding that when Paul say the power, the grace of God, and the mercy of God, that doctrine, he said, "It had such a profound impact on me, I became a prisoner to it. I only want to do, I can only go, I only want to operate within the confines of the desire and the will and the power of God. I don't want to be outside of His will. I don't want to be outside of His truth. I want to be in full agreement. I want His wings to stretch out over me in every facet of my life from my speech, to my eyes, to my ears, to my money, to my whatever. I want it to come under the authority of Almighty God, the Son of God, to whom belongs all things forever and ever and ever."

So, Paul is laboring in prayer. He says, "I want you to be fully pleasing to Him, that you would be fruitful in every good work." He's actually calling us to engage intentionally in good works. And I think our Protestant, you know, background, at times, try and talk us out of that. Like, "That's not the main thing." But it's one of the main outworking's of the Gospel and the evidence of Christ in our lives. But James is going, again, back in James two, "If these things aren't coming forth, if you're not bearing fruits and good work, your faith may be dead. It may need that resurrection power and life that comes through repentance." And maybe you're finding yourself in that position this morning, where you're thinking of your good works, and you're thinking of what you know of the Gospel, and the two, they are not aligning. And I would urge you this morning to take time and to repent. Repent of all your sins, of everything that comes to your mind that disagrees with the will of God and the desire of Christ, and repent. And ask Him to forgive you and regenerate and wash you again.

Some might actually get saved this morning in praying that prayer, because you've never truly submitted yourself fully to Christ in repentance and the born good fruits. And others need a reminder again because we've gone wayward. We've become lax. We've forgotten some of those glorious truths of His Gospel and His affection towards us, and we've become wayward, and our faith is dying. It's impotent. It's losing it's life and vibrancy that it once had.

You know, it's often very convicting to be around a new Christian that has truly been born again. Isn't that interesting? That when an individual experience the power and the grace of God and they are transformed by God, they're a new creation in Christ. All they want to do is good works. And they evangelize everyone. And they pray for the sick. And they're praying for every person. You don't want to go to Walmart with them because us older, "mature" Christians, you know, we're trying to settle them down a little bit. Just kind of pump the breaks. Slow down. It's not all about this. You know, we pat them on the back, and we tell them, "I appreciate your zeal." And we use zeal as this cover to slight them, and what we're actually offended at is our own lack of zeal and belief and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We look at people and we say, "Well, they're just an immature Christian." We write them off, but secretly in our hearts, we're convicted about our own lack of good works in our life and evidences of the Gospel.

The walk of the believer, the work that we endeavor to enter into is essential to the spiritual life of the Christian. And then, also to the glory of God. Number one, the believer, every believer will be rewarded at the coming of the Lord in accordance with their works. They will be rewarded in accordance with their works. Not in accordance with their good intentions, not in what they meant to do, but what they actually did. They're not saved because of those works. They're saved because of Christ's work. I'll just keep saying that again until we believe it. But they're actually rewarded because of their good works. Jesus said over and over and over, He motivated His disciples and all through the New Testament's filled with teaching, bear fruits, do works, steward, be faithful, bear these good works in your life. Be zealous for good works. Over and over and over again.

He says in Revelation 22:12, these are the words of our Lord. He says, "I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me to give to everyone according to his work." According to what he's done. You will receive a reward in Christ in accordance with what you've done. Don't let anyone talk you out of good works. And don't let the devil tell you that those good works will earn you favor and salvation with God either. Don't let anyone talk you out of works of righteousness and generosity and humility and salvation. Don't let anyone talk you out of those things, and don't let the enemy convince you that you must do those things in order to be saved.

Matthew 16:27, "The Son of Man will come in glory of His Father and with the angels, and he will reward each according to his works." According to his walk, according to how it's fleshed out. How did it really happen? Did you allow the Gospel of Christ to transform you? Did you partner with His will? Did you have a vision for a hundred percent obedience? Because there will be many in that day, that they're saved, but their reward is very little because they didn't allow the power of the doctrine to be power in their works as they walked it out.

Paul goes onto define this walk in chapters 4, 5, and 6 of Ephesians. We notice that there's an all-encompassing nature to this walk. The Bible deals with many, many, many, many areas and subjects of life, and we can read them and understand them, and apply the principles of God to these various things. For example, just in 4, 5, and 6, he touches on, not limited to these, but these are some, some of the themes he touches on. Our speech, relating to the world, our worship, our marriages, our child-raising, how to serve, how to lead, how to do spiritual warfare. All of it comes under the Gospel of Christ. Every decision, every thought, every word comes under His Gospel and will be judged in accordance with the Gospel of Christ.

Now, he says, "when I want you to walk," he says, "I want you to walk in a manner that is worthy," and this word "worthy" needs some special attention. The word "worthy", actually conveys a sense of balance. For example, if you were to go to a store to purchase something, in the early service, I said a bunch of bananas. If you were to go and purchase something, you would attribute what you are willing to pay for that specific product, and you would weight in your mind, "Is this worth a dollar, thirty-five for some bananas. And so, it's a scale, so to speak, system. On one side, you have one thing, and on the other side, you have another thing. And

what Paul is telling us here, he's going, "I want your walk, your Christian life, to be in a manner that is worthy of the Gospel.

Talk about a mountain of weight and value that Paul puts on one side of the scale. He's basically saying, the work of the cross and your atonement and the filling of the Holy Spirit that you receive, the seal of redemption, of chapter one. He says that's sitting on one side of the scale. And he says, "I want your walk, when you walk it out, to be in a manner that's commensurate with the other side. I want you to actually walk it out before Me in a way that bears resemblance and gives glory and adequate credence and value to the power of the blood of Jesus and the work of redemption."

Now, when I think of my own life and what Christ has lavished upon me, and I examine my own heart, do I lavish back upon Him? Do I live in a way that is, that is commensurate with the grace of God and the mercy of God as that has been freely poured into my spirit? And I bear the mark of Christ, and I'm filled with the Holy Spirit, and He's given me power to choose that which is good and a desire for Him. Does my walk come into alignment with that? Is it worthy? Is your walk worthy?

This morning, as you examine your walk with Christ, is it worthy of Christ? Does it look like Christ? Is it a poured out offering that is commensurate to what Christ has given to us and lavished upon us?

He says the way, actually, to walk out a deeper life that is worthy of Me is to understand, actually, the truths of doctrine, to be filled with the knowledge of His will, to be filled with Spiritual understand, to know that you were purchased at a price, and it wasn't the blood of some random guy. It was the blood of the Son of God. Christ, the Lord, born of a virgin, took on flesh, bore our reproach, carried our griefs, carried our sorrows for the joy set before Him. Hebrews tells us, He went, and He hung on that tree, and He suffered as an innocent Man. He made you innocent, and He made Himself guilty. He bore the penalty and the debt of your sin and my sin, and He bore the wrath of God that was due for us. And He cries out even from the place of suffering, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" He hung between heaven and earth. He made a way where there was no way. When we were without hope, no hope, estranged from the commonwealth of Israel, cut off from promise, cut off from eternal life.

He says, "I want your walk to smell like that fragrant poured-out oil of Christ." That's why He gave us passages like Matthew 16, and He says, "If you want to follow Me, come deny yourself. Pick up your cross."

Ephesians 5, "Husbands, love your wives like Christ loved the church. Love like that. That's a manner that is worthy of Me. That's a walk that is commensurate with the glorious gift that I have given to you." He goes, "I'm gonna help you. I'm not just gonna leave you out there to do it on your own." He goes, "I'm gonna help you. I want you to walk in a way that is worthy of Me." I want to invite out the worship team. We didn't get to verse 2. We didn't get to verse 2 in the first service, and that's okay because listen to what He says. Listen to the... maybe you're resonating with this feeling right now. To walk worthy of Christ, to bring glory to His name through what we do and what we say and how we say it.

Paul says this. He says, "With all humility." That feeling, that feeling that you may feel right now in this moment. When you weight your own life and your own profession of Christ against the glory and the magnificence of the cross, the innocent Lamb who did no wrong. That's humility. That sense of, "I don't know whether to rejoice or whether to cry. I don't know whether to be excited and dance or to run away in shame." That's the Lord pulling back the veil, and what He's doing is, He's showing us. He's showing us where we're really at. He wants us to know where we're really at. Not because He's angry but because He wants us to go on this journey and walk in a way that is worthy of Him. That that same power of the Gospel that plucked you from the grave would be the same power of the Gospel that you relate to your spouse with, it be the same power of the Gospel that you relate to your roommate with, your neighbor with, your friend with, your co-worker, your child, your child that's just driving you nuts. That the grace of God would pour forth from our lips. "Walk in a manner that's worthy of Me." Let's stand.