

In the last 10 weeks, we have covered a great deal of territory in what is supposed to be a series on the family. And if you have been paying attention, you may be saying: “well, at least you’re telling us that this is about the family, but so far I’ve heard very little about how husbands should treat wives, or how children should obey their parents.” And you would be right.

But there’s a good reason for that. A foundation had to be laid! Today, we’re going to turn the corner toward what one might call more practical preaching about the family. Turn to Eph 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.*¹

We’ll see two things this morning:

- 1) why Paul is exhorting us,
- 2) what he is exhorting us to do,

THE IMPORTANCE OF PAUL’S EXHORTATION:

The word Paul uses here – ‘urge’ is the ESV, ‘implore,’ ‘beseech,’ ‘beg,’ ‘make this request from my heart,’ ‘exhort,’ ‘entreat’ in other versions – is a strong word. One can almost hear Paul’s tone: “Please, please walk in a worthy manner! I’m telling you, you must do this! Do not fail to walk in this manner!”

Why does Paul belabor himself so strongly on this topic? The ‘therefore’ in the text makes this very clear. The word ‘therefore’ – as we have often heard – demands that we ask what the ‘therefore is there for.” Part legal summons, part military command, and part humble plea; Paul is saying that all that has gone before in the book of Ephesians leads him to this logical and sole outcome – that the walk, the manner of life, the conduct of the Ephesians must adhere to a certain character.

So what has gone before in the book of Ephesians?

- 1.3-14 is one of the richest and most succinct summaries of the work of the Holy Trinity on our behalf in salvation that one can find anywhere in Scripture or in any literature anywhere.
 - o the Father’s blessing, election, predestination, **adoption** and kindness,
 - o the Son’s redemption, forgiveness, grace, revelation, the **inheritance** we have together with him,
 - o the Holy Spirit’s sealing into this salvation and down payment on the **inheritance** by His presence.
- the hymn of praise and thanksgiving in chapter 3, in which Paul says: *I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every **family in heaven and on earth** derives its name,*

¹ Eph 4.1

that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.²

Isn't redemption is about God's recreating fallen creation back into its original image? You know the old joke about what happens if you play a Country-Western tune backwards? You get your house back, your wife back, your dog back ... Well, if you play the tune of redemption forwards, we get the garden back. Jesus' work on the cross for us is – one might say – an invitation back into the garden!

- *The angels put the swords away. Now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.³*
- Work is no longer cursed, but part of the story, part of the mural, part of the dance.
- No more of the two great sins: "It wasn't me!" and "God doesn't know what He's doing!"

If Paul believes what he has been saying (and he does) – and if he loves the Ephesians (and he does); how can he do anything less than plead with, command, beg, implore, and exhort them to then walk exactly like redeemed people ought to?! He doesn't want them to waste one minute of God's blessings. He can't bear to see them lose one opportunity to enjoy the riches God has bestowed on His people.

WALK:

All these things call us to walk in a worthy manner. This idea of walking is used often in Ephesians:

- *you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.⁴*
- *by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.⁵*
- *this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over*

² Eph 3.14-19

³ Eph 2.13

⁴ Eph 2.1-2

⁵ Eph 2.8-10

to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. But you did not learn Christ in this way.⁶

- *Therefore be imitators of God, as **beloved children**; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.⁷*
- *you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as **children of Light** (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.⁸*
- *be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.⁹*

Do you see what he's calling us to? Be what you say you are! Or more to the point, if you are in Christ, act like that which God says you are! Beware the two sins of the Garden. "It wasn't me. God doesn't really know what he's doing anyway."

WHY WE NEED PAUL'S EXHORTATION:

We're no longer accustomed to meeting God in the garden for our daily walk. Like the emperor in the famous story, we're so accustomed to getting our own way, we can scarcely conceive of the fact that maybe we aren't really wearing the great finery we think we are. Maybe God really does know what he's talking about!

It is said that insanity is doing the same thing over and over, hoping for a different outcome. The way of the Fall hasn't worked all that well for humanity. But it's the only way we really know. Instead of joyful openness, shameful secrets. Instead of humble service, arrogant self-serving. The original design is so broken, we don't even know that it's broken any more. Brokenness is normal and customary.

So broken and skewed is our mirror – that one that's supposed to reflect the image of God – that anything else one might suggest seems strange or dangerous. Here's my point: as we go through many practical aspects regarding the nuclear family and the family of the church, some of you may decide: I don't know if I like those rules. I'm not sure I want to do it that way.

The design is broken. The pieces still remain in some fashion, but like a mirror full of cracks, the image is distorted and what we see in ourselves is not true. Adam and Eve went from shamelessness to shamefulness. The relationships between themselves, but especially the relationship with God are severely broken.

If these things are true, that:

⁶ Eph 4.17-20

⁷ Eph 5.1-2

⁸ Eph 5.8-10

⁹ Eph 5.15-17

1 - God makes himself primarily known through the family, and more particularly through the family as father, mother, and children.

2 - The human agency of the family in all its various manifestations (home, church, state) is the primary structure by which humanity can exist and function in a meaningful, productive, and peaceful way.

... if these things are true, then I, Mark, by the authority of God's word, urge, implore, beseech, beg, I make this request from my heart, exhort, entreat you all to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called. Trust and obey, in your marriage. Trust and obey in your relationships with each other as believers. Trust and obey regarding your parents. Trust and obey - because there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, than to trust and obey.

- If you're marriage, look at your spouse and say: *I will walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which I have been called.*
- Children, look at your parents and say: *I will walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which I have been called.*
- Church, look at each other and say: *I will walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which I have been called.*

... 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,¹⁰ so help us, God.

Maybe, just maybe, it's time to try a different way, the Father's way, through Jesus' redemption, and the Holy Spirit's power.

Ephesians 4.1

Walking In A Worthy Manner

1. Review

1.1. The family as:

1.1.1. God's primary agent on earth

1.1.2. God's primary structure for social order

1.2. Original design of the human family

1.2.1. Made in God's image: with an analogy of God's character and attributes

1.2.1.1. So that we can understand Him

1.2.1.2. So that we can be in relationship with Him: God has built into the human family the need and capacity for relationship with Him.

1.2.2. Relationship with God means:

1.2.2.1. He has delegated His authority to us

1.2.2.2. He has made us morally responsible

1.2.2.3. He has made us participants in his mural / story / dance in creation

1.3. The design is broken in the fall:

1.3.1. Relationship is destroyed with each other: "It wasn't me!"

¹⁰ Eph 4.1-3

1.3.2. Relationship with God is destroyed: “God doesn’t know what he’s doing!”

2. Paul’s exhortation

2.1. On what it’s based

2.1.1. Based on the work of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit in our salvation (1.3-14)

2.1.2. Christ’s work is an invitation “back to the garden.” We being called back into the family: for example 1.5, 11, 3.14 ff.

2.2. What it means

2.2.1. Forsake the former ways (2.1-2, 8-10, 4.17-20)

2.2.2. Act like that which we now are in Christ (5.1-2, 8-10, 15-17)

2.3. Our response

2.3.1. Beware the sins of “It wasn’t me” and “God doesn’t know what He’s doing.”

2.4. Purpose intentionally to be obedient, whether it’s comfortable or not, *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*, so help us, God.

Applications and thoughts