

Family Ethics – I

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW:

Last week, we saw from Eph 4, that Paul is exhorting the Ephesians to *walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which they have been called*. What we are hearing from Paul is this: “Please, please walk in a worthy manner! You have something in you that calls you to something greater!”

Last week we looked at **why** Paul is pleading with his readers. Paul has pointed out that God has done something so excellent for us, that we will be compelled to walk differently. He outlined what that is in chapter 1.3-14. And he prays for the results of that salvation in 1.18-19, *that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.*¹

Today, we’re beginning to look at **how** to walk in this worthy manner. Notice that Paul follows up his exhortation by saying this that a worthy walk is characterized by three attitudes or attributes: *with all humility and gentleness, with patience.*² In other words:

- 1.1. A right estimation of yourself, and,
- 1.2. A right manner toward others, and,
- 1.3. A right sense of time and place.

A note about method: Jesus invited his disciples many times over: “follow me.” The Bible tells us to “have the mind of Christ.” Paul writes in this letter to the Ephesians: *Be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*³ Therefore, we’ll be looking at these three traits through Christ Jesus’ own example.

HUMILITY: The word for humility means having an estimation of yourself, an estimation that leads to voluntary submission.

Most relationships – perhaps even all relationships – have the element of dominance threaded throughout them.

- Friendships have this element. Who’s the most fun at a party, who has the most friends and influence, etc. Who’s the most popular. These are certainly dominant themes in many Facebook comments I see!
- Another place the theme of pride instead of humility is played out is the church – there very place, perhaps, where one would anticipate the opposite!

¹ Eph 1.18-19

² Eph 4.2

³ Mat 16.24, 1Co 2.16, Eph 5.1-2 respectively

- And marriage is the most intimate and volatile place in which this dynamic is played out.

Whatever the context is; the drive to win, lead, possess, control, and influence is a disease that will wipe out a church, a friendship, a marriage. It becomes a contest of my reputation, my feelings, and my needs over your reputation, your feelings, and your needs.

But consider Christ's example. If the Lord's mission had been to exalt himself to a position of superiority, he could have easily done it. And what's more – herein lies a great secret – he had every right to do so! He had every right and resource to crush his opposition, push aside his detractors, and take the primary place. And, in fact, he ultimately will.

But notice: Sovereign Lord is accused of being less than he is. It was said of him: *Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!*⁴ Pride would have responded: "No I'm not a drunkard! And they're not my friends." Instead Jesus' response was that *the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.*⁵ And:

*You have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously.*⁶

What does this look like practically?

*Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus ...*⁷

What would happen if we served without selfishness? What if, instead of conceit we showed humility? What if a right estimation of ourselves led to voluntary submission for the well-being of the other – even if we are demeaned or humiliated?

- What would happen, husbands if, when we are hurt or angered by our wives, we simply held our tongues?
- What would happen wives if, when your husband doesn't understand you or listen to you, instead of laying into them knowing that the louder you speak the better they'll understand "female," you found a more opportune time and tone?
- Children: what if you were respectful and obedient to your parents, even when you think that you have been wronged? Would it kill you? And what do you think it would do to your relationship with your parents?

⁴ Mat 11.19

⁵ Luke 19.10

⁶ 1Pe 2.21-23

⁷ Phi 2.3-8

- What would happen, dear brothers and sisters if, instead of playing passive aggressive games of shunning, gossiping, and politics; the church was made up of people who served each other without grasping for dominance?
- In short: what would happen if we *kept entrusting ourselves to Him who judges righteously* to protect our reputations and just served God?

I'm not sure we really know, but it would be interesting to find out, don't you think?

GENTLENESS: Humility is a right estimation of oneself. Gentleness is a right manner toward others. Gentleness is "a strength that accommodates another's weakness."⁸ First, let it be known that gentleness is strength, not weakness.

You've heard the phrase "Caspar Milquetoast"? Named after a comic character from the 1930s, Caspar Milquetoast symbolized the attributes of one who is weak, ineffectual, overly sensitive, timid, indecisive, and cowardly.⁹ And this is often the way that Jesus is portrayed: effeminate and passive. Bunk!

Let me remind you that Jesus threw the moneychangers out of the temple, an example of righteous anger and holiness. Consider another interesting example from his ministry:

*They were bringing children to Him so that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, "Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all." And He took them in His arms and began blessing them, laying His hands on them.*¹⁰

The parents of these children saw something in Jesus that convinced them that their children would come to no harm. Even more, they felt that their children would receive good from him, a word of blessing. That was strength, don't you think? He was simultaneously rebuking and instructing his disciples while still attractive to parents and children.

What did his disciples experience? Strength was differently expressed. They should have known better and he spoke to them accordingly. He didn't rail against them endlessly. He didn't curse them for their shortsightedness. But he certainly let them know the nature of the situation, didn't he?

Gentleness is **restraint** of strength or power. A conflict with each other is NOT an opportunity to unleash all barrels of your gun. Lower the volume a bit. Don't use provocative speech. Temper your tone. Ask questions instead of making accusations.

⁸ 22840 *πραΰτης, ητος, ή* (also *πραότης*) as a quality of gentle friendliness gentleness, meekness (as strength that accommodates to another's weakness), consideration. (Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*, Baker's Greek New Testament Library (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), BibleWorks, v.8.)

⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caspar_Milquetoast

¹⁰ Mar 10.13-16

*A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city.*¹¹

We understand this principle intuitively, I think. A whiney child who is tired is treated differently from a whiney child who is rebellious and manipulative. One of the gentlest men I knew had been a Marine Corps drill instructor.

Likewise, authentic community as Christians demands that we treat each other in this way. Not everything deserves righteous anger! Not everything is blasphemy against the throne of heaven and earth. And short of those kinds of things, our speech and actions need to be a strength that accommodates another's weakness.

What would our marriages, friendships, families, and the church look like if we did this? Again, I'm not sure we really know, but it would be interesting to find out, don't you think?

PATIENCE: Finally, if humility is a right estimation of oneself and if gentleness is a right manner toward others, then patience is a right sense of time and place. The word comes from two roots meaning something like "a distant anger".

Again, we look to Jesus for an example. Consider his conversation with the woman at the well in Joh 4.

- Samaritans and Jews despised each other like blacks and whites have done in America. So she challenges him racially.¹² That's one.
- She challenges him on his history and authority.¹³ I wasn't there of course, but I strongly believe that the woman kind of rolled her eyes at this point. That's two.
- She tries to shut off the conversation by challenging him practically.¹⁴ In essence, she's saying, "fine, then put up or shut up and give me the water you're talking about." Again, I wasn't there, but I'm pretty sure she snorted through her nose here. That's three.
- When Jesus begins to get too close to the hardness of her heart, she lies to him.¹⁵ That's four.
- Finally, she bluntly challenges his spiritual authority, maybe to distract him into a useless theological argument.¹⁶ That's five.

¹¹ Pro 15.1, 16.32 respectively

¹² Joh 4.9: *How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)*

¹³ vss 11-12: *Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?*

¹⁴ Joh 4.15 *Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw.*

¹⁵ vss 16-18: *He said to her, "Go, call your husband and come here." The woman answered and said, "I have no husband" ... "You have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly."*

Do you know why this story is called the “woman at the well” and not “the woman in the well?” Because Jesus was patient.

At any point in this conversation, knowing the woman’s hardness of heart, listening to her snide comments, watching her try to engage him (the rabbi) in a theological discussion – again, at any time, he could have said: “Woman, you don’t know what you’re messing with. I gave you a chance but I’m through. I’m not putting up with any more of your nonsense.”

When Jesus responds, he responds to her snideness with humility and her childish theological games with gentleness. He exemplified James words: *slow to speak and slow to anger*, as well as *quick to hear*.¹⁷

Do we exemplify those words? Do we keep our anger at a distance? Do we strike at the first possible moment? Or do we wait, hold our tongues, seek counsel, think about the outcomes of what we might say?

Do we want change to take place now! Lord give me patience and give it to me now! A great place to practice patience is to drive behind someone who is too slow, keep the 3 second rule and watch what happens in our “gut” while you do it.

APPLICATIONS / OBSERVATIONS:

Community: Notice that the result of our salvation goes directly to community. We are not encouraged to go up on a mountain and meditate, but to live in with each other and work together with humility, gentleness, and patience. After Peter’s great sermon on Pentecost day, 3,000 believed and immediately begin to be a community of believers together:

*So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.*¹⁸

There is a principle embedded here in Eph 4 and, in fact, in the gospel of the Kingdom: genuine faith invariably leads to genuine community. Couldn’t we also call that a gospel of the family of God?

Necessity: These are necessary traits, not modules that can be added on later, if we feel like it. They are not options on a new car. These are fundamental traits for the Christian. This is part of it means to walk in a worthy manner. In other words, a genuine faith invariably leads to a genuine walk with Christ.

That is, these things of which Paul is speaking are results. In the same way that if your house doesn’t cool off in the summer time your AC might not be on, likewise if you are not demonstrating and growing in gentleness, humility, and patience; your soul might not be turned on.

¹⁶ vs 20-22: “You people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me ... You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.”

¹⁷ Jam 1.19

¹⁸ Act 2.41-42

Family Ethics – I – A Different Attitude

Ephesians 4.2

1. Review: *walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called* (Eph 4.1)
 - 1.1. Based on our great salvation (Eph 1.3-14)
 - 1.2. Resulting in enlightenment, hope, riches, and power – but maybe not in the way you might think! (Eph 1.18-19)
2. A note about method: Called to be like Christ (Mat 16.24, 1Co 2.16, Eph 5.1-2), so we'll look at the following traits as Jesus expressed them.
3. Attitudes Of A Right Walk
 - 3.1. _____: a right _____ of oneself, a voluntary _____
 - 3.1.1. _____ can be a key theme in friendships, the church, and above all marriages.
 - 3.1.2. Degraded, Jesus could rightly have dominated all circumstances. But instead he came to *seek and to save that which was* _____ (Matthew 11.19, Luke 19.10, 1 Peter 2.21-23).
 - 3.1.3. We're to have this same _____ (see Philippians 2.3-8).
 - 3.2. _____: a right _____ toward others, a _____ that accommodates another's weakness.
 - 3.2.1. Jesus could _____ his disciples and show kindness to children at the same time (Mark 10.13-16).
 - 3.2.2. _____ is likewise great strength (Pro 15.1, 16.32).
 - 3.3. _____: a right sense of time and place, a "distant _____."
 - 3.3.1. Woman at the well provoked the Lord 5 times! See John 4. Jesus waited and persisted.
 - 3.3.2. Likewise, we need to *be quick to hear, slow to speak*, _____ to *anger* (James 1.19).
4. Observations And Etc.
 - 4.1. _____: Genuine faith invariably leads to genuine relationships among believers.

4.2. _____: Genuine faith invariably leads to a genuine walk with Christ.

Humility, submission, Dominance, lost, attitude, gentleness, manner,
strength, rebuke, Restraint, Patience, anger, slow, Community, Necessity