

## Ephesians 4-1-3 Walking worthy!

### Scripture reading:

**Ephesians 4:1-3 (ESV)** — 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, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

**Prayer for illumination:** please join me in prayer...

### Introduction:

How you walk matters, especially if you are an elite race walker.

Race walking has been an Olympic sport since 1908. Race walkers walk 50Km or roughly 31 miles. The world record holder is Australian Nathan Deakes. He walked 31 miles in 3:35 averaging a staggering seven minutes per mile.

The last time you watched race walking, you probably wondered why they look so funny when they walk?

It all comes down to rule 230.2. This rule ensures that race walkers are walking and not running. According to this rule a race walker can never lose contact with the ground during his or her stride. In other words, one part of the race walker's foot must constantly be in contact with the ground. When someone runs, there is always a point in their stride when both feet are off the ground. To keep both feet on the ground at all times the race walkers do all kinds of funny things with their hips, arms, legs, and pelvis.

To ensure that race walkers compete by the rules, judges are constantly analyzing the race walker's feet. (Show image) If three separate judges hold out a warning paddle, to a race walker, he or she is disqualified from the competition. This happens to roughly 15% to 20% of all race walkers.

How race walkers walk really matters. If they walk in an unworthy manner, they are done!

In a similar sense, how Christians walk matters. This brings us to this morning's passage.

**Ephesians 4:1 (ESV)** — 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.

Walking is a common metaphor in Ephesians for the Christian life. In Ephesians 3:1, Paul urges the Ephesian Christians to walk worthy of their calling.

If we are honest, I think most of us have to admit, that we don't always walk worthy of our calling. Right??? But we must. ***So how do we walk worthy of our calling?***

To walk worthy of our calling, we need to understand two things.

*The motives of walking worthy*

*The manner of walking worthy*

### First, the motive of walking worthy!

*How does Paul motivate the Ephesians to walk in a manner worthy of their calling? In verse 1...*

**Paul motivates with gospel indicatives!**

**Ephesians 4:1 (ESV) — 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,**

The word “therefore” in verse one marks a significant transition in the book of Ephesians. In chapters 1-3 Paul explains several key doctrines. Then in Chapters 4-6 Paul tells us how to live, in light of those key doctrines.

In other words, Paul is saying, in light of all the glorious truths proclaimed in chapters 1-3, you must live a certain way (as described in 4-6).

This means that Paul is moving from-

Doctrine to duty.

Principal to practice.

Creed to Conduct.

Exposition to exhortation.

Indicatives to imperatives.

Let me explain the last two terms (indicatives and imperatives). They are very important!!!

An indicative is a statement of truth. An imperative is a command.

In Paul’s letters the indicatives always precede the imperatives. For instance, in Romans 1-11 Paul lays out the redemptive indicatives. Then in Romans 12-16, he lays out the ethical imperatives. See also Gal. 5:1; Phil. 2:1; Col. 3:5; 1 Thes. 4:1.

Paul tells us what is true before he tells us what to do. In other words, Paul always motivates by Grace. Paul never says, “obey God and he will accept you.” Instead, he says, “because God has already accepted you, you must obey.”

Redemptive indicatives always precede ethical imperatives.

Maintaining this order is a crucial gospel issue.

*This order makes Christianity unique among world religions.* Every other religion says, “Do these things/obey these rules/follow these practices and you will be loved and accepted.”

With the word “therefore” in Ephesians 3:1, Paul is essentially saying, since you are now aware of all the amazing gospel truths in chapters 1-3, you will be properly motivated to obey God’s commands in chapters 4-6.

There are no commands in Ephesians 1-3, just gospel indicatives. You have been chosen, adopted, forgiven, raised from the dead, made joint heirs with the Jews, you are stones in the temple where God’s very presence dwells, etc....

Ephesians 1-3 redemptive indicatives.

Ephesians 4-6 ethical imperatives.

The order of these events is massively significant!!! This is true for many things in life!!!

### **Illustration:**

Let’s talk about sex and marriage.

Sex before marriage is a bad thing. Sex after marriage is a good thing. What is the difference? The sequence of the events. If sex comes after marriage, God is honored. If sex comes before marriage, God is dishonored, lives are ruined, and sexual pleasure and fulfillment are stifled. Getting the order right makes all the difference in the world.

In a similar sense...

It is essential to wash your hands before you eat.  
It is essential to measure the drywall before your cut.  
It is essential to get your license before you drive.  
It is essential to put on deodorant before you work out.

It is essential to place redemptive indicatives before ethical imperatives.

### **Application:**

The redemptive indicatives must fuel the ethical imperatives. Think of the redemptive indicatives (Ephesians 1-3) as a massive train engine pulling 300 box cars down the tracks. This order would never be reversed. You would never see box cars pulling a train engine.

God's love, grace, and mercy pull us towards obedience.

We don't obey to be loved; we obey because we are loved. Ephesians 1-3 describes how much God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit have loved us!!! In light of this, and only in light of this, are we called to love him in return. And we love him by obeying his commands.

For many people Christianity is a simply a list of dos and don'ts. Don't do this, don't do that. You need to do better and try harder. If not, God will not accept you. This is not Paul's mentality. Paul reminds the Ephesians that redemptive indicatives always come before ethical imperatives.

Christianity is not good advice (do better and try harder). Christianity is the good news of what God has done for us in Christ Jesus. In light of this good news, we obey, and we must obey.

In light of these realities, Christians must constantly ask themselves this question; why do I strive to walk worthy? If you are not motivated by grace, you are not living in line with the gospel!!! And you need to repent!!!

Paul motivates us with gospel indicatives to walk worthy. In light of this, what does it actually mean to walk worthy? This brings us to the second point.

*First, the motive of walking worthy!*

### **Second, the manner of walking worthy!**

*Walking worthy involves several things... like what???*

#### **Walking worthy means walking in humility!**

**Ephesians 4:1-2 (ESV) — 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, 2 with all humility . . .**

Paul begins with the virtue of humility. The word for humility is often translated as lowliness. This virtue was not prized by the ancient Greeks. As a matter of fact, it was despised. Humility was a synonym for weakness, servility, and lowliness. Only the slaves were supposed to be humble.

Contrary to the prevailing worldview, the first Christians placed great value on the virtue of humility. In fact, most theologians believe that humility is the chief virtue. In other words, all other virtues flow from this virtue.

Why do Christians value humility so much? Because Jesus exemplified humility.

**Philippians 2:5-8 (ESV) — 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the**

form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. **8** And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

No human being has ever been as humble as Jesus. Said another way, Jesus was the humblest person to ever live. He was always looking after the needs of others. As a result of his great humility, God the Father exalted him to the place of highest honor.

We are called to imitate the humility of Jesus. What does this look like? Extreme other-centeredness!!!

### **Illustration:**

In 1960, no one received more fan mail than Annette Funicello. In the same year, a nationwide poll voted her teenager of the year. She was also America's favorite Mouseketeer.

She broke thousands of hearts when she married her agent in 1965.

After a 23-year battle with MS she died in 2013. Within a week of Annette's passing google recorded millions of hits on her life and death. Almost every article contained a single throwaway line that read,

**"In 1986, she married her second husband, horse trainer Glen Holt."**

Here is what most people did not know. Within a year of marrying her second husband, she was diagnosed with MS. Yet Glen loved her and served her for 23 more years. One author writes,

**"Yet during those last years, Glen bathed her, lifted her on and off the toilet, changed her diapers, and attended to her every need. In the end, America's sweetheart was ravaged, bloated, and comatose. It is easy to love the girl of our dreams, but Glen loved her in dirty diapers and with bloated flesh—not for a while, but for nine thousand straight days."** (Peterson, 37-39)

Glen Holt was just an Asterix in an obituary. But he was great in heaven's eyes. He was engaged in lowly service for the benefit of another. He was engaged in extreme other-centeredness!

This is the kind of humility God calls us to.

### **Application:**

One sign of humility is extreme other-centeredness... are there others? Yes!!!

Someone who is humble is a good listener.

They don't talk too much...

They are other focused in conversation...

They are teachable and correctable...

They are quick to admit when they are wrong.

They are very grateful for everything, because they know what they deserve.

They rarely complain, because they know what they deserve.

They are rarely critical of others, because they are aware of all their own failings.

A humble person is a very joyful person.

This kind of humility is the key to a happy marriage...

This kind of humility is essential for church unity... which is the context of Ephesians chapter 4.

*Walking worthy means walking in humility. In addition...*

**Walking worthy means walking in gentleness.**

**Ephesians 4:1–2 (ESV)** — 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, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,

Gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).

We are told to be gentle when confronting someone in sin.

**Galatians 6:1 (ESV)** — 1 Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

Pastors are called to be gentle...

**1 Thessalonians 2:7 (ESV)** — 7 But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.

Why must we be gentle??? Because Jesus was Gentle!!!

**Matthew 11:28–30 (ESV)** — 28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

### **Application:**

Do people describe you as gentle?  
How do you respond when confronted by your spouse or boss?  
How do you interact with your children?  
Would they describe you as gentle?  
Would your employees describe you as gentle?  
Yes, there is a time to be firm and fight, but that is rare.

For the most part we must be characterized by gentleness!

*Walking worthy means walking in humility, walking in gentleness... and it means...*

### **Walking in patience!**

**Ephesians 4:1–2 (ESV)** — 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, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,

The third virtue is the virtue of patience, often translated as long-suffering. The phrase long-suffering makes the most sense in 3:2 in light of the next phrase “bearing with one another in love.”

God calls us to suffer long with others. In other words, he calls us to put up with other people’s issues for a long time. We are literally called to suffer a long time as a result of the failings of others. Another good word is tolerance. We are called to tolerate the foibles of others.

Again, Jesus was the epitome of patience. Think about his relationship with Judas. He knew for three years in a row that Judas would betray him in the end. Yet he put up with him. He not only put up with him, he suffered long with him. He loved him, he was gentle and meek towards him.

Since God has been patient with us, we must suffer long or be patient with others.

### **Illustration:**

This is challenging when our culture has become increasingly impatient...

We want instant news  
We love fast food  
We are furious when our internet connection slows to 100 megs...  
We speed date  
We pay extra for overnight shipping  
We text with abbreviations because it takes way too long to write real words ...  
We cut corners...  
We take short cuts...  
Generally speaking, we want things now...

Recently I have pulled up behind someone at a stop sign (twice) and they just stayed there. Even though there was no traffic in any direction. The second time was this weekend in the north cascades. I pulled up behind a big pick-up truck at a stop sign and just waited. Finally, the driver pulled forward, so I pulled forward and then she slammed her brakes on, even though there was no one coming in either direction. Fortunately, my wife informed me that the car in front of me was stopping. I was hot... I laid on my horn, turned into a rage monster, and slammed into her bumper. Ok... I did not really do those things, but I wanted to. Why? Because someone slowed me down for 18 seconds. Really???

We think we are patient until someone cuts us off or we have to go to the DMV. Then our impatience is revealed.

### **Application:**

Go wants us to be patient with our spouses, children, roommates, customers, co-workers, and the members of our small group, even when they bug the bejeebers out of us. Why? He has been infinitely patient with us.

*Walking worthy means walking in humility, walking in gentleness, walking in patience... finally it means...*

### **Walking in unity!**

**Ephesians 4:1-3 (ESV)** — **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, **2** with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, **3** eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Paul says that we must be eager to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. The word for eager was often used for the intense effort involved in completing a long and arduous trip. This means that we are to make an intense an arduous effort to maintain church unity.

Paul is not exhorting us to create unity, but to maintain unity. The unity has already been created by the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy spirit. But we must be eager to work hard to maintain the unity we already have in the Holy Spirit.

We maintain this unity by walking in the first three virtues mentioned; humility, gentleness, and patience.

### **Illustration:**

Currently, like never before, there are many issues that could divide our little church right down the middle.

Different opinions on race.  
Different opinions on politics.

Different opinions on Covid.

Recent pastor's lunch... describe the different perspectives.

There are groups of people in our church who are on the exact opposite ends of the Covid-19 spectrum. Some people think we are crazy for suggesting that anyone should wear a mask or social distance. They think that we are surely

on the slippery slope to compromise! Other people have said that they no longer trust the elders, since the elders are not strictly abiding by the letter of the law. Other people have accused us of being unloving and opposed to life, since we are meeting on the lord's day in the midst of a deadly pandemic. Both groups are sincere and love Jesus.

When the opinions are strong, the probability for division increases. Satan would love to see us divided over Covid, Race, or politics.

**Application:**

In light of this, we must heed Paul's exhortation to work hard for unity. How? By walking in humility, walking in gentleness, and walking in patience.

**Conclusion:**

How race walkers walk really matters. If they walk in an unworthy manner, they are disqualified. How we walk as Christians matters! If we walk the wrong way church unity is destroyed and God is dishonored.

Paul calls us to walk in a manner worthy of our calling! This is not only difficult it is impossible.

It is impossible to be humble, gentle, and patient all the time.

Yet there was one man who walked perfectly. His name was Jesus.

He exemplified humility  
He exemplified gentleness  
He exemplified patience

Even though he was perfect, he was crucified in our place, for our sins. He died for our lack of humility, gentleness, and patience. As a result, we can be forgiven.

Now when God looks at us, he sees us robed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ who was perfectly humble, gentle, and patient.

But it does not stop there. Since Jesus exemplified these virtues, he can help us walk in them.

Next time you are struggling to be humble, gentle, or patient, cry out to Jesus for help. He not only longs to help you, he has the power to help you. let's pray....