



In our series on Discovering the Church we have looked at four pictures of the church. We have seen the church as a family and the goal is maturity. We also saw the church as a field - the goal being the quantity of our fruitfulness. We have seen the church as a building the temple in which God dwells and the goal here is quality! Last week we saw the church as a body and the goal is unity.

The church is a called out assembly (ecclesia) of people who share one thing in common - faith in Jesus Christ for the salvation of their souls. Those of us who are in the church are there because God sought us and called us out! So how do we live up to our calling as the body of Christ and walk in unity? This brings us to our text for today, Ephesians 4:16:

In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said, *"I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."*

- The Person - I. He is the founder of the church
- The Promise - Will
- The Process - Build
- The Possession - My. Jesus is the owner of the church, he is the Head of the Church.
- The Product - Church
- The Power - the gates of hell will not overcome the church!

Walk Worthy Of Your Calling

The book of Ephesians is about what the Father is doing: In the Heavens - Through the Church - In Christ - By His Spirit - For His glory - forever (3.21)

What He is doing through the church is calling and redeeming a group of people and:

- Forming them into a Body for His Son to lead (1.22-23)
- Building them into a Temple for Himself (2.21-22)

So that by the Church which is His body and temple, He can:

- Display His grace, kindness, power and wisdom
- Dwell in her fully in such a way that all of this results in the praise of His glory!

In Chapters 1-3 Paul explains what we must “know” about what God is doing in through the church. Now in Chapters 4-6 he explains what we must do based upon what we know!

In Chapter 4.1 Paul beseeches us to “walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.”

- Walk - speaks of our way of life, conduct. A constant and consistent manner of living
- Worthy - corresponding to. This word is used of the balance beam on a scale. Put something on one side, put something on the other side that will equal or balance it.

Let me be abundantly clear at this point: Conduct does not precede conversion!

Phil. 1:27 Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,

This morning we want to consider how we can walk worthy of our calling in the church. The main thought of this section is found in v1 & 3:

“Walk worthy of the calling (1.1,3-6,11,2.5-6) with which you were called... endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

A walk worthy of our calling in the church is one that maintains the unity of the Spirit. In our text Paul gives three ways to walk worthy of our calling in unity in the church.

YOU WALK WORTHY WHEN YOU REFLECT THE CHARACTER OF GOD IN YOUR PERSONAL LIFE. (2)

Forbearance

To endure, to kindly tolerate. William Barclay describes this attitude as what you would see in an old dog being pestered by a smaller, younger puppy.

Romans 2:4 Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

We express this when we are wronged, when others have an unreasonable complaint or grievance or quarrel with us:

- We are to put up with those who complain against us
- We are to put up with those who irritate us
- We are to put up with those who argue against us.
- We are to put up with those who sometimes attack us.
- We do all this because God has rooted and grounded us in love!
(3.17)
- We will have to love one another enough to put up with each other when we are irritated by someone else in the body!

Long-suffering

Long-suffering means to bear under for a long time, to delay wrath, to not break forth with angry words or violent deeds.

1 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

We are to patiently endure these difficult people in the way God patiently and graciously endures wicked rebellious men over a long period of time. (Ga5:22)

We must respond to those who irritate us with long-suffering, we do not respond with resentment or retaliation.

Gentleness

Reluctance to avenge wrongs. To suffer long will require that we develop a gentle and controlled response at all times toward others.

Walk Worthy Of Your Calling

Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

Lowliness

This gentleness requires that we think biblically about ourselves this is the essence of humility. Lowliness was a degrading term in Greek culture used to refer to a groveling servant. This term was taken by Christians to represent a distinctly Christian virtue.

Two examples:

- Jesus - I did not come to be served but to serve...
- Paul - "a bondservant of Jesus Christ..."

To rightly esteem other people in the body and their opinions and ideas as more important than your own. All this because we love them!

Romans 12:3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

YOU WALK WORTHY WHEN YOU BELIEVE IN THE GOD OF THE BIBLE (4-6)

This "one body" - the visible church (1.23) has a theological foundation. It is founded upon spiritual truth - doctrine!

One Spirit (4)

It is the Holy Spirit that gives life to the body. That Spirit is the soul of the body without Whom the body cannot exist.

1 Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

The Spirit is the pledge of our inheritance (1.14)

One Lord (5)

One Jesus Christ - to whom all true Christians owe allegiance. There is one faith in one Lord unites all believers. There is one baptism by water is the external seal of incorporation into Christ's body

This includes all people of every race, color, language, background, both Jew and Gentile.

Walk Worthy Of Your Calling

Acts 4:12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

One Father (6)

There are not many gods but one true God and Father of all - all speaking of His paternal relationship through creation (1Co.8:5-6).

- Above all - He reigns over all
- Through all - In His creative activity
- In you all - He is everywhere present. Specifically he dwells in those who have trusted Him through His Spirit.

1 Corinthians 8:5-6 For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.

YOU WALK WORTHY WHEN YOU ARE DOING THE WORK OF MINISTRY (7-16)

People - Equipping by gifted men (7-12a)

- Apostles and prophets - laid the foundation of the church (2.20). A foundation is laid only one time. Jesus is the cornerstone for that foundation.
- Evangelists are the missionaries who pioneer outreach in areas where the gospel has not yet been proclaimed.
- Pastor-Teachers are the shepherds of the flock, teachers of the Word. Speaks of local church ministry.

Process (12)

Pastors perfect > Saints serve > Body builds

Product (12c-16)

Equipping results in spiritual maturity (12c-13,15)

The body of Christ is built up (12c). Each one comes to the Unity of the faith - This is a goal to be reached

The depth of a church is determined by the quality of worship and instruction. The breadth of a church is determined by its commitment to fellowship and evangelism.

Walk Worthy Of Your Calling

This unity will come with an increasing knowledge of Christ. In this way the church comes to maturity. Individualism is seen as a mark of immaturity. "Perfect man" - manhood. To the full measure of perfection found in Christ. When a baby is born the head is unusually large in comparison to the rest of the body, as it develops the body grows in due proportion to the head.

Spiritual Maturity produces spiritual stability (14-15)

We are to abandon childish attitudes. We are to grow out of childish instability in what we believe. We no longer are tossed around by every wind and wave of doctrine. We are no longer susceptible to the deceit and craftiness of false prophets. We understand there is no unity in compromise, there is no unity in false teaching. The church cannot allow falsehood to go uncorrected yet the truth is vindicated in accents of love (15)

Spiritual stability results in spiritual service (16,12b)

The aim of these ministries is the equipping of all God's people for service. (12b) Christ is the One out of whom all Christians grow. As each part works properly the whole body is supported in the way it needs. We must be what we are in the body, not for ourselves but for the benefit of the other members of the body.

"Half-hearted Christians are the most miserable people of all. They know enough about God to feel guilty, but they haven't gone far enough with Christ to be happy." - Ortlund

It is time to grow to maturity!

Each of us would do us well to place ourselves on God's scale to see if we are walking worthy of our calling. May we "endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." This means we must collectively work hard and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Do you need to commit to growing up spiritually - to maturing in the body of Christ so that you do your part in supporting the other members of the body.