

# Walk Worthy

**I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling [vocation] with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Ephesians 4:1-3)**

**For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. (Colossians 1:9-10)**

## Introduction

As believers, we are exhorted to walk worthy of our calling. What does the word “calling” (“vocation” in the KJV) in Ephesians 4:1 refer to?<sup>1</sup> One normally thinks of our calling or vocation as a job. We hear people say they are *called to be a pastor*, *called to be an evangelist*, or *called to be a missionary*; whether they are actually doing God’s will is sometimes questionable. However, most believers have other jobs and rarely refer to themselves as *called to be a kindergarten teacher*, or *called to be a plumber*. Is this verse referring to our job or Christian service, or something else?

Ephesians 4:1 begins with “I, therefore.” This indicates that the meaning or purpose of the statement is based on what the Apostle Paul has already talked about in the letter. The resounding theme of the first three chapters of Ephesians is on what God has done for us through Christ. It has to do with our position in Christ—what we have through our salvation—instead of our job or work as believers.

The Greek word for “vocation” is *kleesis*. It is translated as “vocation” only once in the KJV; all other times it is translated as “calling” (the other verses are Romans 11:29; I Corinthians 1:26; 7:20; Ephesians 1:18; 4:4; Philippians 3:14; II Thessalonians 1:11; II Timothy 1:9; Hebrews 3:1; and II Peter 1:10). In these verses “calling” refers to what God has done for us, or our position as believers in Christ, instead of what we are doing for God. For example:

**There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your *calling*.**  
(Ephesians 4:4)

**Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner; but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us, and**

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<sup>1</sup> All references are quoted from the *New American Standard Bible* (NASB 1973 Reference Edition). Italics were added by the author for emphasis. Words in brackets are either equivalent words from the *King James Version* (KJV) or, if in italics, were added by the author for clarification.

**called us with a holy *calling*, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity. (II Timothy 1:8-9)**

As believers, we were “called” by God; He called us to Himself for His purpose. Also, when God calls, He will bring it to pass because of His faithfulness (I Thessalonians 5:24).

**For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be first-born among many brethren; and whom He predestined, these He also *called*; and whom He *called*, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. (Romans 8:29-30)**

**God is faithful, through whom you were *called* into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. (I Corinthians 1:9)**

**But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. And it was for this He *called* you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (II Thessalonians 2:13-14)**

**Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were *called*, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (I Timothy 6:12)**

Therefore, walking worthy of our vocation is not based on whether we are a pastor, janitor, homemaker, or teacher, but who we are in Christ. We are to walk worthy of our calling as believers, which is our salvation in Christ.

## **Salvation**

What is the foundation of our calling? It is our salvation in Christ. No one can serve God without first being saved. Why do we need to be saved? How is a person saved? What happens to us when we are saved?

### **Our Need for salvation**

God is perfect and holy, but we are not. Anything contrary to the perfect nature of God is sin. Though most people do not consider themselves to be sinners, everyone sins. In fact, it is our nature to sin (I Corinthians 2:14). Even a twinge of jealousy or the smallest of *white lies* is sin. In and of ourselves, we are unable to come to God on His terms or even please Him (Romans 8:8). Furthermore, because all of us have sin in us and are sinful, the just outcome is judgment and eternal punishment. As far as God is concerned, sin is a very serious matter—it comes with a death penalty.

**As it is written, there is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one. (Romans 3:10-12)**

**For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)**

**And 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 [*Satan*], of the spirit that is**

**now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desire of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. (Ephesians 2:1-3)**

**For the wages of sin is death... (Romans 6:23)**

### **God's Remedy**

If God is perfect and holy and we are not, how can we come to terms with Him? Many people try to sway God in their favor by doing good works, and hope that their good works outweigh any bad things they may have done. Some people devote their lives to religious service in the hope of being found worthy of God.<sup>2</sup> However, all of these seemingly noble efforts are in vain—we will always fall short of God's righteousness and perfect will. In effect, most of us are hoping God will judge us according to our sense of fairness instead of according to His righteous justice.

Thankfully, God provided a remedy for us. We can come to God, but only on the basis of what He did for us through His Son Jesus Christ.

**For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. (Romans 5:6)**

**But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. (Romans 5:8-10)**

**He [God] made Him [Christ] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (II Corinthians 5:21)**

### **Salvation is a Gift**

There is nothing we can do to earn the favor of God or His salvation (Romans 4:4-5). Instead, God offers salvation to us as a gift. No one earns a gift, and no one deserves a gift. God offers this gift of salvation on the basis of His love, grace, and mercy toward us as demonstrated through the death and resurrection of His Son for us. This gift is beyond comprehension and is truly indescribable (II Corinthians 9:15).

**For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)**

**For 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, that no one should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)**

**He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:5-7)**

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<sup>2</sup> Few people consider themselves to be sinners, even though we all are. Read Matthew 9:10-13 and Matthew 23 to see what Christ said about the religious leaders of His people.

The word *grace* refers to the undeserved favor of God. We do not deserve to be saved and are not worthy of the death of Christ for our sins, but God favors us anyway because of His love toward us. *Mercy* refers to not getting what we deserve. Because of His love toward us God is being merciful by not condemning us for our sins. Salvation truly is a gift of God.

## **How are We Saved?**

If you were to ask 100 religiously minded people how to get to heaven, even those who consider themselves to be Christians, chances are you might get 100 different answers. Answers might include baptism, communion, confirmation, church attendance, tithing, religious service, social service, piety, self-sacrifice, etc. These things involve what people do to try to satisfy God—they are all works for salvation. According to God, however, salvation is a gift and not something that can be earned. So, how is a person saved?

What do you do when somebody gives you a gift? The most appropriate response is to say “Thank you.” This is all God really wants from us. We are sinners and, by nature, enemies of God—this is the bad news. The good news (or *gospel*) is that God demonstrated His love toward us by sending His Son Jesus Christ to die for us. He is offering the gift of eternal life to us based on the work that Christ accomplished on the cross for us—that He died for our sins, was buried, and rose from the dead. Scripture refers to this as the gospel of salvation. If we believe (truly, from the heart) what God has done for us (this is called *faith*), all we have to do is acknowledge His gift by thanking God for what He has done.

**Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. (I Corinthians 15:1-4)**

**In Him [*Christ*], you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise. (Ephesians 1:13)**

**But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart”—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. (Romans 10:8-10)**

**Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him [*God*] who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness. (Romans 4:4-5)**

**But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. (Galatians 3:22)**

Are you saved from the consequences of your sins? If so, praise God. If not, but you want to be, simply thank God for His gift of salvation. Prayer is our means of talking to God. There is no special prayer or required manner of prayer for thanking God (out loud, silently in your heart, kneeling, sitting,

standing, etc.). If you believe in what God has done for you through Christ, simply thank Him, in your own words, for sending Christ to die for your sins.<sup>3</sup> If you have acknowledged this to God, then you are saved. Praise God! Now, we will find out some of the benefits that come with believing the gospel of salvation.

### **Blessings of Salvation—What We Have in Christ**

The benefits package that comes with believing the gospel of salvation is staggering. Here are some of the things each and every believer receives by the grace of God. Please take the time to read these and related verses and passages—the grace of God is awesome and overwhelming.

- Forgiveness of sins (Romans 3:23-25; Ephesians 1:7)
- Eternal life (Romans 5:21; 6:22-23)
- Peace with God—reconciled to Him (Romans 5:1, 10-11)
- Chosen in Christ (Ephesians 1:4)
- Called by God according to His purpose (Romans 8:28-30; Philippians 2:13)
- Adopted as a child of God (Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 3:26; Ephesians 1:5)
- Member of the true church, which is the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 1:22-23)
- Member of the household of God (Ephesians 2:19-22)
- Holy and blameless (Ephesians 1:4)
- Sealed by the Holy Spirit—eternal security (Ephesians 1:13; Romans 8:38-39)
- Indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5; 8:11)
- Alive in Christ (Romans 6:7-11; Ephesians 2:5)
- Regenerated—born again, made alive, made new (Titus 3:5)
- Seated with Christ in the heavenlies—citizen of heaven (Ephesians 2:6; Philippians 3:20)
- Complete in Christ (Colossians 2:9-10)
- Justified—declared not guilty (Romans 3:26; 4:25; 5:1,9; 8:30; Titus 3:7)
- Sanctified—set apart by God as sacred to Himself (Romans 6:22; I Corinthians 1:2; 6:11)
- Glorified—made holy (Romans 8:30)
- Considered righteous by God (Romans 4:5,22-25; 5:17)
- Riches of God’s grace and glory (Ephesians 1:7,18)
- God’s workmanship (Ephesians 2:10)
- Nothing can separate a child of God from His love (Romans 8:31-39)

In summary, we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). We did not earn any of these things. They were bestowed upon us by God through His love on the basis of Christ’s shed blood for our sins. We have been bought with a price (Christ’s death for us—I Corinthians 6:19-20); therefore, we should be thankful to God and desire to glorify Him and walk worthy of our calling. How do we do this? Are we left to our own devices to figure out how to please God? Are we dependent on what our feelings, our church, or our pastor tell us to do?

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<sup>3</sup> God does not require or expect any act or ceremony to accompany or confirm our salvation. We are saved, completely, by His doing and His grace (Ephesians 2:8-9).

## Therefore, Let Us Walk Worthy of Our Calling

If God took the time to tell us what He has done for us, it stands to reason that He would tell us what we should do to please Him. The Bible is the word of God—His word to us—and it is full of instructions. However, the many religions and denominations bear witness to the fact that people generally use the Bible to fit their own purposes resulting in countless interpretations on how to please God. So, after salvation, what does God want us to do in response to what He has done for us? How do we walk worthy of our calling—our salvation—in Christ?

### Rightly Divide the Word of God

**Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately [rightly dividing] the word of truth. (II Timothy 2:15)**

There is a hymn that says that every promise in the Book (Bible) is mine. Brethren, we know this is not true. There were many promises made by God to individuals that apply to them alone. Recall God's promises to Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for example. My family will not be saved from a great flood nor will I be the father of many nations. And then there are all the promises directly to the nation of Israel. Believers today do not have a nation of our own nor do we have a promised land to claim or occupy.

Consider the commands of God, also. God commanded Israel to obey His commandments—not only the ten commandments but the whole Law of Moses. If they did so, they would be His people and He would be their God (Exodus 19:5-6). Brethren, we are no longer under the Law of Moses but under the grace of God (Romans 6:14; Galatians 3:1-5; Colossians 2:13-14). We are not to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom of heaven (Israel's future kingdom on earth) as Christ commanded His disciples to do (Matthew 4:17, 23; 10:7), but proclaim the gospel of grace of God as Paul was appointed to do (Acts 20:24; Ephesians 3:1-12). We are not to direct the message of grace to Israel first (Jerusalem, then Judea, and then Samaria—Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8), because under grace there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile (I Corinthians 12:12-13; Galatians 3:28). Most importantly, salvation is no longer through repentance and water baptism (Matthew 3:1-6; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38), but simply by believing that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose from the dead (I Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 3:21-26; Ephesians 1:13-14).

Are these things contradictions in Scripture? No. These differences show us how God has dealt with mankind over the ages. They reveal a progressive revelation of God's eternal plan. All of Scripture is for us in that we can learn from it because it is the word of God (II Timothy 3:16-17), but not all Scripture is to us. As we study the Bible, we must be careful to remember this fact and ask ourselves to whom a particular book, passage, or verse is directed. Does it concern a particular individual, the nation of Israel, members of the body of Christ, God's children in general, or the lost? We are exhorted to rightly divide, or accurately handle, the word of God. Brethren, God's specific instructions to us, as members of the body of Christ in this dispensation of grace, are presented in Paul's letters (Romans through Philemon).

## Follow Paul's Example

**Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.** (I Corinthians 11:1)

When asked whom we should follow as believers, most Christians would reply that we are to follow Jesus. We are to follow our Lord Jesus Christ, but can we follow Jesus as He lived on earth? If so, then among other things we should obey the entire Law of Moses (Matthew 19:16-21; 23:1-3), go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:6; 15:24), and heal the sick and raise the dead (Matthew 10:8; Mark 16:17-18). However, God does not require members of the body of Christ to do these things nor should we even try.

How, then, do we follow Christ? We are exhorted to follow Christ as Paul followed Christ. Paul was appointed by God as the Apostle of the Gentiles (Romans 11:13) and the dispenser of the gospel of grace of God (Ephesians 3:1-12). God established Paul as the pattern for all believers in this dispensation of grace.

**It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. And yet for this reason I found mercy, in order that in me as the foremost [first], Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience, as an example for those who would [hereafter] believe in Him for eternal life.** (I Timothy 1:15-16)

Following his declaration to the Philippian believers that he wanted to be found in Christ and His righteousness, Paul exhorted them to follow his example and to observe those who walk accordingly (Philippians 3:17). If we follow or imitate Paul as he followed Christ, our lives will be pleasing to God and we will know the inner peace that comes from God (I Corinthians 4:15-17; 11:1; Philippians 4:9; I Thessalonians 1:6-7; 4:1; II Thessalonians 2:15; 3:7-9; II Timothy 1:13; 2:2). The following actions and attitudes demonstrated by Paul are some of his examples that we should follow or imitate.

- Content, regardless of circumstances (Philippians 4:11-12)
- Dependent on God (Philippians 4:13; II Corinthians 12:9-10)
- Rejoiced (Philippians 2:17-18; Romans 16:19)
- Thankful to God (Philippians 1:3; Romans 1:8; II Corinthians 9:15) and for fellow believers (Romans 16:1-16; I Corinthians 1:4)
- Encouraged brethren to be unified in faith (I Corinthians 1:10; Philippians 1:27; 2:1-2)
- Behaved properly toward believers (I Thessalonians 2:10-12)
- Worked so as to not be a burden to others (I Thessalonians 2:9)
- Prayed for fellow brethren (Philippians 1:3-5, 9-11; Romans 1:9-12; Ephesians 3:14-19)
- Did the right thing despite the consequences (Acts 20:22-24; II Corinthians 11:23-27)
- Did all things for the Lord and the sake of the gospel rather than for men or to seek their approval (I Corinthians 9:23; Galatians 1:10)
- Showed compassion toward others (Philippians 2:25-28; Romans 9:1-3)
- Humble (Acts 14:11-15; Ephesians 3:8; Philippians 3:7-8; I Corinthians 2:1-5)
- Conformed himself (was not offensive) to those he preached to (I Corinthians 9:19-22; 10:31-33)
- Self-disciplined (I Corinthians 9:26-27; Acts 24:16)
- Good conduct toward the world—did not give unbelievers cause to blaspheme God (II Corinthians 1:12)

- Eager to serve God (Romans 1:15), was a faithful servant of Christ (I Corinthians 4:1-2), and was unashamed of the word of God (Romans 1:16-17)
- Stood for the truth (Acts 26:24-25; Romans 9:1; I Timothy 2:7)
- Warned fellow believers about false teaching (Philippians 3:18-19; I Timothy 6:20-21; II Timothy 4:1-4)
- Shared the gospel despite his circumstances, such as during imprisonment (Philippians 1:12-13; Acts 16:31-32)

## Walk in Love

**Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up of us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.** (Ephesians 5:1-2)

Love is the cornerstone of our walk, and should be the basis of all of our thoughts and actions. What is love? How does God define it?

**Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails...** (I Corinthians 13:4-8)

Think about these things, brethren. Is this the love we experience? Are we patient, kind, and humble? Or, in our relationships with our loved ones and others, are we more apt to be jealous, arrogant, or selfish? Do we hold grudges against them or slander them? These things, which many of us do, are not love. The love described in this passage is contrary to our sinful nature. Where does it come from?

**The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might love through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.** (I John 4:8-11)

True love comes from God because God is love. As believers, we should want to love because of what God has done, and is doing, for us through Christ. We should love without hypocrisy and be devoted to one another (Romans 12:9-10). We should owe nothing to anyone except to love one another (Romans 13:8-10). Through love we should serve one another and love others as ourselves (Ephesians 4:1-3; Galatians 5:13-15; I Thessalonians 3:11-13). Furthermore, our love should not be based on emotion, which is subject to sinful desires, but on real knowledge and discernment (Philippians 1:9-10).

**And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against any one; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.** (Colossians 3:12-14)

**And may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ.** (II Thessalonians 3:5)



## **Be Thankful**

**In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.** (I Thessalonians 5:18)

We are exhorted to be thankful for all things (Ephesians 5:20). It is easy to be thankful when things are fine, although many of us tend to take pride in our good fortunes and forget to be thankful. It is not so easy to be thankful when things are not going well. We must remember that God causes all things to work together for good for His children and be thankful even if we do not understand what He is doing (Romans 8:28).

God is almighty and sovereign, and we should remember to thank Him for who He is (Psalm 92:1; 105:1-7; 136), for what He has done for us through Christ (I Corinthians 1:4; 15:57; II Corinthians 9:15; Colossians 1:12; 3:15), and for what He is doing through us (Colossians 3:17).

We are to pray to God with thanksgiving, realizing that all things are from Him (Colossians 4:2). If we cease worrying about our circumstances and take all our concerns to God in prayer with thanksgiving, we are promised the peace of God that comes with the full understanding that He is working all things out according to His will and good pleasure (Philippians 2:12-13; 4:6-7).

Additionally, we should thank God for our fellow believers and for what God is doing for and through them (Romans 1:8; Philippians 1:3; II Thessalonians 1:3; 2:13; Ephesians 1:15-16; Philemon 4).

**Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before Him with joyful singing. Know that the Lord Himself is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him; bless His name. For the Lord is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting, and His faithfulness to all generations.** (Psalm 100)

## **Be Humble**

**Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you.** (I Peter 5:6-7)

From our perspective, salvation is an act of humility. If we believe Christ died for our sins, then we believe that we are sinners in need of salvation. We are relying on God that He is faithful to save us from our sins. In other words, we are putting our trust in God and not in ourselves (Ephesians 1:12-13).

Our trust in God that He can save us on the basis of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is rooted in Christ's humility. Christ humbled Himself by giving up His position with God and becoming a man. He was obedient to God even to the point of dying for us on the cross. What greater example of humility can we have? We should have the same attitude of humility displayed by Christ.

**Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; 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, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.** (Philippians 2:3-8)

Humility is contrary to human nature—our natural tendency is to concentrate on ourselves and take credit for the things we have done. However, as believers in Christ we are to put on humility (Colossians 3:12-13; I Peter 5:5) and to walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8).

**It is better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.**  
(Proverbs 16:19).

The opposite of being humble is to be proud, self-centered, arrogant, conceited, or boastful. The Bible has much to say against these natural attributes (Proverbs 11:2; 16:18; 21:4, 24; 28:25; 29:23; Matthew 23:12; Romans 1:28-30; 11:20-21; Galatians 5:26; I Timothy 3:6; II Timothy 3:2). We are exhorted not to think too highly of ourselves (Romans 12:3, 16).

We are in no position to be proud of our salvation because it is an undeserved gift of God based on what He did for us through Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9). Nor should believers be proud of the measure of their understanding of the gospel of grace of God, for that, too, is a gift of God (Ephesians 1:15-18; Romans 12:3). Let us not test God by being prideful, because pride will lead to trouble (Proverbs 16:18; Galatians 6:7). Instead, we should be humble and thankful for what God has done, and is doing, for us.

## **Yield Ourselves to God**

**Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.** (Romans 6:11-13)

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the only one to walk this earth without sin. Thankfully for us, He who knew no sin became sin on our behalf in order that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (II Corinthians 5:21). Brethren, sin is a fact of life. We are born with the curse of Adam's sinful nature and, even in this dispensation of grace, we do not lose that old nature when we are saved (Romans 5:12-19; 7:22-23; Ephesians 2:1-3). However, upon belief of the gospel of salvation we gain a new nature—the perfect nature of Christ because He is in us and we are in Him (Romans 8:9-11; Ephesians 2:4-6; Colossians 1:27). Therefore, we have two natures working within us.

Believers not only have the capacity to sin, but continue to do so throughout life on earth. However, because of the power of God and the nature of Christ within us, we have the ability to choose not to let sin rule our lives. Due to our weakness, unfortunately, most of us tend to forget to reckon ourselves dead to sin and continue to expose ourselves to sin and reap its consequences (Galatians 6:7-8). We know it to be true that bad company corrupts good morals (I Corinthians 15:33; Proverbs 13:20).

Yielding ourselves to God requires a conscious effort on our part to continually consider our associations, actions, and thoughts. We are exhorted to abhor evil things and avoid even the appearance of evil (Romans 12:9; I Thessalonians 5:21-22) and be sober minded (Ephesians 5:17-18; I Thessalonians 5:4-8; Titus 2:6). Additionally, we are to set our minds on things above, where Christ is (Colossians 3:1-3), and think pure thoughts (Philippians 4:8). Our desire and efforts should be to pursue righteousness (I Timothy 6:11; II Timothy 2:22) and do all things for God rather than for ourselves or men (Colossians 3:17, 23).

**Do all things without grumbling or disputing; that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world. (Philippians 2:14-15)**

### **Be a Living Sacrifice**

**I urge you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:1-2)**

In the first 11 chapters of Romans we learn, among other things, that all people are lost in sin and do not even seek after God; Christ died for our sins; we are saved by grace through faith apart from works; we were enemies of God but now have peace with Him; Christ's death, burial, and resurrection is our death, burial, and resurrection; we have received the gift of eternal life; we continue to sin because of our old nature but are not condemned by God because we are in Christ; God has adopted us as His own children; and nothing can separate us from His love. Because of all of this, we are now strongly urged to live our lives set apart to God because it is the reasonable, and right, thing to do.

We are in the world, but we are not of it (I Corinthians 2:12; Philippians 3:20). God has sanctified us—set us apart as sacred—to Himself (I Corinthians 6:11), and He wants us to live sanctified lives (II Timothy 2:21). Christ was crucified for our sins, and was raised for our justification (Romans 4:25). His death was our death and His resurrection was our resurrection; therefore, we are to consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ (Romans 6:1-11). Our desire should be to say with Paul:

**I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me. (Galatians 2:20)**

Is it easy to be a living sacrifice, sanctified unto God? Can we expect to fit in and be accepted by the world and still be pleasing to God? It is not natural to live for Christ in this evil world. Think about what the world finds acceptable—are the things of the world pleasing to God? We must think about what we do and say and with whom we fellowship and ask ourselves if it is honoring to God. As Christ suffered because He lived according to truth and righteousness, we will suffer if we live for Him (Philippians 1:29-30; II Timothy 3:12). However, if we continue to live as we did before we were saved or as if we were not saved, we will be living contrary to what God desires for us, suffer the loss of fellowship with Him, and be miserable.

**But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. (Ephesians 4:20-24)**

### **Walk by Faith**

**Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory**

**far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal...for we walk by faith, not by sight.** (II Corinthians 4:16-18; 5:7)

The phrase “seeing is believing” just does not hold true regarding the things of God. God demonstrated His power through mighty miracles to Pharaoh and yet he did not change his ways. Even though the people of Israel sought after signs from God before they would believe Him or His prophets (I Corinthians 1:22), their failure to do so is chronicled throughout Scripture. Only those who already believed God by faith recognized His miraculous signs.

**Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval.** (Hebrews 11:1-2)

Many people in the world today are looking for signs by *God* in order to believe in something or to establish their faith, whatever it may be. Even many believers, as well as those who falsely claim to know Christ, are looking for signs and miracles and participate and perform in meetings devoted to signs and miracles. They claim to be able to speak in tongues and to heal all sorts of sickness and disease.

Brethren, although God certainly did demonstrate His power through the agency of men, such as through Moses and the prophets, His Son, and His apostles (including Paul), He is not doing so in this dispensation of grace. Mankind has proven itself incapable of recognizing God through His miracles. Paul demonstrated the power of the Holy Spirit through all kinds of miracles, including raising the dead, but in his first letter to the Corinthians (who were abusing sign gifts such as speaking in tongues— I Corinthians 14) he said that the sign gifts would pass away (I Corinthians 13:8-13). Indeed, they did pass away during Paul’s ministry as evidenced by the total lack of references to sign gifts in his later books and the fact he was no longer able to heal his coworkers (Philippians 2:25-27; I Timothy 5:23; II Timothy 4:20). The passing of sign gifts coincided with the completion of the revelation to Paul concerning the gospel of grace and the mystery—God’s word to us, therefore, was complete and nothing else was needed for God to reveal Himself to us (Colossians 1:25-27; 2:8-10).

Instead of looking for signs, therefore, we are to walk by faith and not by sight. How do we do this? If we believe what God has done for us through Christ, then we ought to live accordingly by faith as demonstrated by the following exhortations.

- We were saved by the grace of God, so we should work out our salvation by living above reproach (Philippians 2:12-16).
- God has reconciled us to Himself, so we should reconcile ourselves to Him (II Corinthians 5:18-20).
- We have been sanctified, or set apart, by God, so we should live sanctified lives for Him (II Timothy 2:19-21).
- We have been made righteous by God, so we should present ourselves as instruments of righteousness (Romans 6:12-13).
- We have been bought by the precious blood of Christ, so we should glorify God in our bodies (I Corinthians 6:19-20).
- Christ is in us, so we should put on Christ (Romans 13:14).
- God has forgiven us, so we should forgive others (Ephesians 4:32).

- God has bestowed upon us His strength and power, so we should be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might (Ephesians 1:18-21; 6:10-17).
- We are citizens of heaven, so we should live as good citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:17-20).

## **Be Above Reproach**

**Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights of the world.** (Philippians 2:14-15)

As children of God, we are ambassadors for Christ (II Corinthians 5:20). As such, although we are in the world, we are not of it—our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). How do we represent Christ and how are we viewed by the unsaved world around us? Do we live and behave like the world or do we try to live by a higher standard?

To grumble or complain about our circumstances implies we do not really believe that God is in control or is accomplishing His will through us (Philippians 2:13). Paul learned to be content regardless of his circumstances, which is a good example for us (Philippians 4:11-13). We should evaluate our behavior—are we more likely to complain about something or be content?

Disputing with our fellow brethren, or anyone for that matter, is a symptom of pride and arrogance, and leads to disunity (I Timothy 6:3-5; II Timothy 2:14). We are exhorted to humble ourselves by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, and intent on one purpose (Philippians 2:1-8). It is better to hold our tongue than to try to get in the last word in an attempt to prove our point. It is better to speak with grace and with words that are edifying, and to let the Holy Spirit open the hearers' ears to the truth (Colossians 4:5-6; Ephesians 4:29).

It is unlikely that believers have any influence on the behavior of this world, or their country, state, or city. However, we do have an influence on those whom we come into contact everyday—family members, friends, neighbors, coworkers, supervisors, teachers, etc. These people who are familiar with us are watching us. Unfortunately, many of us tend to mix in so well with the world that we do not appear to be any different. Although some believers put on an appearance of godliness, the people who know them often see them as hypocrites. Do we discredit anyone, boast of our accomplishments or possessions, cast blame on others, lie, steal, cheat, gamble away time or money, participate in worldly festivities, or participate in any other activities that are dishonoring to God and our Lord Jesus Christ?

As children of God we are lights of the world, or beacons of truth, and should avoid the deeds of the world, which are considered by God to be darkness (Ephesians 5:6-13; Romans 13:12-14; II Corinthians 6:14; Colossians 1:12-13; I Thessalonians 5:4-5). We should not give unbelievers cause to blaspheme God because of our sinfulness (Romans 2:24).

**For our proud confidence [rejoicing] is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you.** (II Corinthians 1:12)

## Do All Things for the Lord

**And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father...Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men. (Colossians 3:17, 23)**

It does not matter what we do in life nearly as much as it matters how we do what we do. A pastor may be the leader of a large and active church, but is he serving himself or the Lord (Philippians 1:15-17)? Is he even teaching the truth? A teacher may have a great following, but is he teaching for personal success or for the Lord? Is he motivated by the knowledge of man or the love of God? A musician may be considered gifted and powerful, but is he performing for the adulation of man? We must examine what we do and how and why we do it. Is our motivation to serve God or man (Galatians 1:10)?

It is not easy to do all things for the Lord. In fact, because of our old sin nature, no one has ever done all things for the Lord. Our old nature is pure sin, is powerful, and is self-serving. It craves attention, admiration, and glory. As long as we walk on this earth, our new nature in Christ will be in constant battle with the old and, unfortunately, our sin nature will win its share of the battles. Thankfully, however, our new nature is greater and, by the grace of God, there is no condemnation because we are in Christ (Romans 7:14-25; 8:1).

To do all things for the Lord means we need to do the right things and with the right motivation. As believers, we have choices to make everyday between right and wrong. Are we going to serve our sinful desires or are we going to serve God and do the right thing?

**Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God...I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. (Romans 6:12-13, 19)**

We cannot depend on our own knowledge to do the right thing in the eyes of God. God does not want us to do what *seems* right but what *is* right. It is man's nature to do what is right in his own eyes, but for the unbeliever the natural consequence is death (Proverbs 14:12; 21:2). We must rely on Scripture, rightly divided, in order to know and do the right thing (II Timothy 2:15; 3:16-17). Of course, there are consequences for doing the right thing that many believers fear: suffering and persecution (Philippians 1:29; II Timothy 3:12). However, to suffer for doing what is right in the name of our Lord is a blessing (Matthew 5:11; Romans 5:3-5). Is it not far better to suffer for doing what is right than for doing what is wrong (I Peter 3:17)?

What is our motivation to do the right things? Are we seeking rewards or treasure in heaven? By our works, do we hope to be in a better position in heaven than fellow brethren who are not as diligent as we are? Is not this attitude a form of selfish ambition? Would it not be far better to do the right thing, for the Lord, because it is the right thing to do? Do we need any more motivation to serve God than to remember what He has done for us through Christ and be thankful?

## Speak with Grace

**Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person.** (Colossians 4:6)

Does it matter how we talk to our family, friends, or coworkers, or to strangers? Does a quick answer with strong or harsh words accomplish the same purpose as a thoughtful and gentle answer? When we are trying to get a point across, does the manner of our speech have anything to do with how the other person receives it? How do we speak about others?

The Bible has much to say about how we talk to and about each other. What we say and how we say it usually comes from the heart, and our natural heart is deceitful and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). By our very nature, then, it is easy to tear people down with our words. Words cannot be taken back; those things spoken in judgment or anger are often remembered forever by the recipient. Therefore, we must draw our strength from God and His Spirit and be careful about what we say and how we say it.

Most of us must admit that, at one time or another, we have said something to someone or about someone that we regret. Sometimes we intentionally speak words unfit for ambassadors of Christ, or speak in a manner that incites anger, jealousy, or pain in the listener. More often, though, we are not even aware of what we are saying or the consequences of our words. Therefore, we are exhorted to speak to each other with grace, as though our words were seasoned with salt. Most people add salt to food to make it taste better—the food is more palatable and enjoyable. Likewise, we should speak in a manner that is palatable and makes the situation better.

**Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear.** (Ephesians 4:29)

We are to speak the truth with each other and in such a way that we are an example to other believers and above reproach by anybody (I Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:6-8). We are to avoid filthy speech, dirty or abusive jokes, or slandering of others (Ephesians 4:25, 31; 5:4; Colossians 3:8-9; I Peter 3:8-10). Should we laugh at or tell the *funny* joke that is crude or derogatory? Should we curse the weather or the inconsiderate driver? Should we speak improperly of those in authority? No. Instead, we must be careful to avoid or stop practicing such things and desire to speak with grace.

In speaking the truth with one another, there are times when we must admonish or correct each other. Speaking the truth of God and His word sometimes requires a strong position that is not well received by the hearer. All Scripture is inspired by God and is to be used for doctrine (teaching), reproof, correction, and instruction (training) in righteousness (II Timothy 3:16-17). Whereas Christ continually taught and corrected His disciples with grace, He called the Pharisees and Sadducees snakes because of how they abused God's word and misled the people of Israel (Matthew 3:7; 12:34; 23:29-33). Paul's letters are full of instructions on how we should live and serve God, but he called the Corinthians carnal babes and the Galatians foolish because they were misusing their knowledge and liberty in Christ (I Corinthians 3:1; Galatians 3:1). He also had harsh words about some people who caused harm to himself and other brethren because of their opposition to sound doctrine (I Timothy 1:19-20; II Timothy 4:14-15). If we find that we must admonish others, it should be done with all wisdom (Colossians 3:16).

In the book of James, the brethren were exhorted to be quick to hear and slow to speak (James 1:19-20). And the book of Proverbs has many references about how we speak, including Proverbs 15:1-4; 16:21; 17:4; 19:1, 21:23; 26:28; and the following passages:

**He is on the path of life who heeds instruction, but he who forsakes reproof goes astray. He who conceals hatred has lying lips, and he who spreads slander is a fool. When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise. The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver, the heart of the wicked is worth little. The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of understanding.** (Proverbs 10:17-21)

**He who speaks truth tells what is right, but a false witness, deceit. There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. Truthful lips will be established forever, but a lying tongue is only for a moment.** (Proverbs 12:17-19)

### **Stand Fast in Our Freedom**

**It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.** (Galatians 5:1)

Brethren, it was for our freedom, or liberty, that Christ died for us. Freedom from what or for what? When many people think of freedom today, they think in terms of political freedom and living in a free country. And many, including believers, try to do everything in their power to stay free. However, this is not the kind of freedom that Paul is referring to. Our freedom does not depend on our circumstances but on what we have in Christ.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul was chastising them for trying to serve God by subjecting themselves to the Law of Moses. Because they knew better through his teaching, Paul called them foolish for trying to live according to the works of the Law instead of living by faith (Galatians 3:1-5). Brethren, we are no longer under the Law but under the grace of God (Romans 6:14). Because it is perfect, the consequences of the Law is death (II Corinthians 3:4-6). Thankfully, through Christ's death for us the Law was taken away; in fact, it was nailed to the cross (Galatians 3:10-13; Colossians 2:13-14). Therefore, we are free from the slavery, or bondage, of the Law and should no longer subject ourselves to it. However, are we subjecting ourselves to the Law anyway?

Like the Galatian believers, many brethren today are trying to live according to at least parts of the Law and believe they are glorifying God in doing so. Specific issues addressed by Paul concerning the Galatians included subjecting themselves to circumcision and observing certain days, months, seasons, and years for spiritual purposes. Are believers doing any of these works of righteousness today?

Baptism is to believers today what circumcision was to the Galatians. Most, if not all, Christian denominations, and many other religions as well, require or incorporate some form of water baptism as a requirement for salvation or a symbol of faith. Brethren, water baptism was an act that, when following repentance of sins and done so in faith, resulted in the remission of sins (Matthew 3:2,6; Acts 2:38). However, in this dispensation of grace, water baptism is not a means of remitting our sins nor is it required by God or even desired by Him (I Corinthians 1:17). There is one baptism today, and it is a spiritual baptism that places us into the body of Christ by faith (Romans 6:3; I Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 4:4-6). To preach or submit to water baptism today is putting ourselves back under the Law.



How many believers think that we should obey the Ten Commandments? It appears that many do. The commandments described in Exodus 20 were the first part of the overall Law of Moses. Strict obedience was required by God and, if the people of Israel had actually obeyed them, then they would have enforced the specific consequences detailed by God. In many cases, the penalty for breaking a commandment was death. Why, then, would we want to put ourselves under the Law? Furthermore, why should we want the Ten Commandments displayed in public places (or anywhere else) and try to impose them and their consequences upon the unbelieving world?

Many brethren consider the Sabbath day as holy; and some try to abide by at least some of the restrictions associated with that day as detailed in the Law of Moses. This effort is in vain because there is no Sabbath day in this dispensation. Nor are there any other holy days, months, seasons, or years (Galatians 4:9-11). This includes Christmas and Easter and other holidays considered sacred by many brethren. There is nothing in Scripture that indicates we should observe a day commemorating the birth of our Lord, nor is a day set aside in Scripture to observe His death for us. Yes, Christ was born as a human and we should be very thankful for that. And yes, Christ died for our sins, which is the very foundation of our salvation, but we should be mindful and thankful for this every day of the year. We know these things happened by faith; however, to observe them as special days for the sake of worship are works of righteousness and are contrary to God's will for us.

The church today is bogged down in doctrine and practice that is a mixture of Law, grace, and tradition. Just as Israel's spiritual leaders had nullified the Law by changing it or adding to it (Matthew 23), the church today has nullified the grace of God by developing countless sets of rules and new doctrines. Brethren, Christ died for us so that we could be free from the bondage—and curse—of the Law.

Another very important aspect of our freedom in Christ is our freedom from the bondage of sin. We are not to turn our freedom from the curse of the Law into an opportunity for the flesh; instead, we should use our freedom to serve each other in love (Galatians 5:13-15). Although we are not to try to obey the Law of Moses, the perfection of the Law is summarized by loving our neighbors as ourselves. Furthermore, we should not live according to the sinful desires and works of the flesh, but should walk by and bear the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-25). Through faith in Christ's death for our sins we have victory over the power of sin and should no longer subject ourselves to it (I Corinthians 15:55-58; Romans 6).

### **Bless Those Who Persecute Us**

**Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not...Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord. But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:14, 17-21)**

The Philippian believers were exhorted to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ and to stand firm in the truth. They were to do this despite opposition from others because, on behalf of Christ or for His sake, God had granted to them not only salvation in Christ but also to suffer for Christ (Philippians 1:27-30). Persecution is a natural consequence of living godly lives because, by

nature, people resist and fight the truth of God, and Satan hates us because we no longer belong to him (II Timothy 3:12; Ephesians 2:1-3).

Many believers complain of persecution and seek justice or retribution through the courts and media. This is contrary to the instructions and examples we have in Scripture. We are to consider true persecution as a blessing, endure the persecution because we will draw strength from it, and even bless those who persecute us (Matthew 5:11; John 15:18-20; Romans 5:3-5; 12:14, 17-19; II Corinthians 1:5-7; I Peter 2:23). To resist or fight for our Christian rights implies that God does not know what He is doing in our lives (Philippians 2:13; I Peter 4:19). Instead, we are to forgive those who wrong or defraud us and, if possible, try to reconcile with them (Ephesians 4:32; Romans 12:20-21; I Corinthians 4:11-13; 6:7).

When our Lord stood unjustly accused before Pilate, did He fight for His rights? No. Instead, He responded in the following way.

**My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.**  
(John 18:36)

When He was hanging on the cross, being put to death by the hands of His own people, did Christ vow to pay them back? No. Instead, He asked His Father to forgive them for they did not know what they were doing (Luke 23:34). Stephen is another example for us. While he was being stoned to death for telling the truth to the leaders of Israel, Stephen cried out to the Lord asking Him not to hold their sin against them (Acts 7:60).

Paul, too, lived this truth. His life as God's servant is an example for us, and we should take it to heart (I Timothy 1:15-16). He suffered tremendous physical persecution from unsaved people opposed to the gospel of grace (II Corinthians 11:23-27; Acts 14:19), and emotional persecution from brethren who were envious of his authority (Philippians 1:15-17). Finally, he was put to death for His service for Christ (II Timothy 4:6-7).

Some of us bring persecution upon ourselves for the wrong reasons. We should not suffer as a troublesome meddler, but as a Christian (I Peter 4:15-16). In other words, if we suffer for our Lord, let it be for the right thing (I Peter 3:17). If we are being persecuted for meaningless or unscriptural causes (e.g., fighting for prayer in public schools, posting the Ten Commandments in public places, etc.), we are bringing it upon ourselves. If we are to suffer for Christ, it should be for the truth and with pure motives; otherwise, it is self-inflicted or self-centered persecution for no worthwhile purpose. We need to walk uprightly and godly, so as not to be guilty of causing unbelievers to blaspheme God because of our actions (Romans 2:24).

Some believers in some countries suffer imprisonment, beatings, and even death because of their faith. Most of us, however, are persecuted in other ways. Standing for the truth may result in the loss of friends or even fellowship with relatives. Unfortunately, our greatest opposition may be from fellow believers. Because of our stand for the gospel of grace and understanding of the distinctiveness and importance of Paul's ministry, we may be rejected by our Christian friends and made unwelcome in, or even forced to leave, our church fellowship. We may suffer ridicule to our faces or behind our backs. Whatever may happen, we must understand that all believers are in God's hands, and we are to rejoice

in Him regardless of our circumstances and not seek retribution against those who persecute us in any way. Instead, we should set our pride aside and bless those who persecute us.

### **Walk in Wisdom**

**Therefore 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.** (Ephesians 5:15-17)

Why should we walk wisely? To act with wisdom is to be able to exercise discernment or good judgment based on what is true or right. God wants us to understand His will so that we are able to discern the truth from evil and not be foolish in our thoughts or actions. In Ephesians 4, we are exhorted not to walk in the futility of our mind, nor are we to lie or steal, be bitter or slanderous, or do anything else that would grieve the Holy Spirit. In the first part of Ephesians 5 we are exhorted to avoid participating in the following things: immorality, impurity, greed, filthy talk, empty words (false doctrine or foolish speculation), or any other sinful activities. To avoid doing these things, we must walk in love (Ephesians 5:1-2) and walk wisely.

We are imperfect beings and will continue to sin, but our desire should be to live in a fashion that not only shines as a light to those around us, but also in a way that does not bring condemnation upon us or God (Ephesians 5:8, Romans 2:24). This is not easy. We live in an evil age (Galatians 1:3-4; Ephesians 6:13), and members of the body of Christ are in the minority in this world. Among believers, those who know and stand for the truth of this dispensation of grace are a small minority. Consequently, we find ourselves alone not only in the world but, unfortunately, also among other brethren.

We must remember that the gospel of salvation is considered to be foolish by the unbelieving world (I Corinthians 1:18-25). Additionally, those who stand for Christ are considered to be fools (I Corinthians 4:10). This type of foolishness is considered to be honorable by God. However, we must not be fools in any other way, but be wise.

Paul called the Corinthian believers carnal (fleshly) babes because their sinfulness prevented them from being able to handle the truth (I Corinthians 3:1-3). He called the Galatians foolish because they mistakenly thought that they could better serve God by placing themselves back under practices of the Law of Moses (Galatians 3:1-5). Unfortunately, Paul could call the church today carnal and foolish.

**Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity.**  
(Colossians 4:5)

We are exhorted to conduct ourselves with wisdom in this unbelieving world so that we can make the most of opportunities as they present themselves. It is hard to share the gospel of salvation with someone who might not be saved, or the things of God with a fellow believer, when that person knows by our actions that we are hypocrites—our credibility is compromised.<sup>4</sup> We ought to live by example (I Timothy 4:12). We need to avoid the appearance of evil by doing what is right and good, and by

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<sup>4</sup> All believers sin, so sin in itself is not hypocritical. We should endeavor to live according to God's will, but humbly recognize that we will continue to sin (see Paul's personal struggle with sin in Romans 7:7-25). However, when a believer claims to be a Christian but is known for getting drunk, attending wild parties, lying, cheating, being arrogant, etc., then his hypocritical behavior is a stumbling block to his witness for Christ and is dishonoring to God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

avoiding or removing ourselves from spiritually compromising actions or situations (I Thessalonians 5:21-22). We should not get caught up in useless *spiritual* discussions or *vain babblings* because they lead to ungodliness (Ephesians 5:6; I Timothy 6:20-21; II Timothy 2:16). We should not be gossips or busybodies (I Timothy 3:11; 5:13; II Timothy 3:3). Instead, we should love our fellow brethren, behave properly to those around us, and quietly work with our own hands (I Thessalonians 4:9-12).

For us to truly walk wisely in this evil age, we need to know who we are in Christ (what God has done and is doing for us through Christ) and how God wants us to live (His will for us as His children). We need to endeavor to present ourselves as workmen who do not need to be ashamed, and to do so requires that we rightly divide, or accurately handle, the Scriptures (II Timothy 2:15; Romans 6:12-13; 12:1-2). God's word, rightly divided, provides all the guidance we need to live as we ought and to walk wisely and worthy of our calling (II Timothy 3:16-17).

## Walk in Peace

**And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.** (Colossians 3:15)

Though we may not like to think of ourselves in this way, brethren, before we were saved we were enemies of God (Romans 5:10). By nature, we were dead in sin and children of wrath (Satan) like everyone else (Ephesians 2:1-3). In this sinful and unrighteous condition, we could not come to terms with our righteous God. However, God provided a way—one way—for us to be at peace with Him. He did so by sending His Son to die for us—in our place. By faith in Christ's redemptive work for us, then, we are now at peace with God (Romans 5:1-11). We who were once dead in sin are now new creations and the righteousness of God in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17, 21).

Most people are searching for inner peace, but if they are enemies of God (unsaved), they cannot know true peace. Brethren, we are at peace with God, and He wants each of us to know and experience His peace in our day-to-day life. Therefore, we should walk in the peace of God. We are to put off, or no longer live according to, our old self and its sinful ways and put on the Lord (Romans 13:12-14; Ephesians 4:20-24). Because of Christ's redemptive work for us, God considers us to be dead to sin; we, then, should consider ourselves dead to sin and yield ourselves as instruments of righteousness (Romans 6:10-13).

In reality, many believers do not experience the peace of God. Many of us seem to live in fear and discontent and behave no differently than the world around us. Instead of understanding God's power and sovereign will, we are afraid of or even resistant to those who are in authority over us (Romans 13:1-7). Instead of putting on the full armor of God and standing firm in the truth and our freedom in Christ (Ephesians 6:10-17; I Corinthians 15:58; Galatians 5:1), we are afraid of what others may think or possible persecution and suffering. Instead of believing that the word of God and His grace are sufficient and understanding that we are already blessed with all spiritual blessings (II Corinthians 12:9-10; Ephesians 1:3; Philippians 4:11-13), we are not satisfied (content) and seek more or better things. We tend to add various religious works and traditions, and demand pastors and teachers who sound good, to improve ourselves and keep us excited (Galatians 3:1-3; Ephesians 4:14; Colossians 2:20-23; II Timothy 4:1-4).

If we walk worthy of our calling, recognizing that our strength and ability to do so is by God's grace, then the peace of God will rule in our hearts. Instead of holding on to our old ways and living in fear and discontent, we should walk according to the will of God.

**And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against any one; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. And let the peace of Christ [God] rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.**

(Colossians 3:12-15)

**Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right [just], whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence [virtue] and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you.** (Philippians 4:6-9)

## Conclusion

Not one single person has been or ever will be worthy or deserving of salvation. We are saved by the love, mercy, and grace of God. However, if we believe the gospel of salvation, God considers us to be His children and wants us to walk worthy of our salvation. This does not mean that God wants us to pay Him back for saving us. Our salvation is a gift, and gifts cannot be earned and should not be paid for in return. Instead, we are exhorted to live in such a way that our lives have merit—we should be useful or valuable.

**I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called.** (Ephesians 4:1)

Prior to exhorting the Ephesian believers to walk worthy of their salvation, Paul reminded them of what they had in Christ. In fact, all believers have these blessings by the grace of God.

- We have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies (1:3).
- We were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (1:4).
- God considers us to be holy and blameless because we are in Christ (1:4).
- We were predestined to adoption as sons through Christ to God (1:5).
- God bestowed His grace upon us through Christ (1:6).
- We have redemption—the forgiveness of our sins—through the shed blood of Christ (1:7).
- We have the riches of God's grace (1:7).
- We have obtained an inheritance (our hope of eternal life in Christ) by being predestined according to God's will (1:11-12).
- We have been sealed in Christ by the Holy Spirit (1:13-14).
- We are members of the church, which is the body of Christ (1:22-23).

- Though we were dead in sin, God, through His love and mercy, has made us alive in Christ (2:1-5).
- We have been saved by the grace of God, and have been raised up with Christ and are seated with God in the heavenlies (2:5-8).
- We are God's workmanship (2:10).
- We have access to God through Christ by the Holy Spirit (2:18).
- We are of God's household (2:19).
- God has made known to us, through the Apostle Paul, the manifold wisdom of God in the form of the gospel of grace and the revelation of the mystery (3:1-12).
- We have the power of God working within us (3:20).

Think on these things that God has done for us. We should be humbled because we do not deserve God's love. We should be thankful to God and our Lord Jesus Christ for what we have received by grace. These blessings should motivate us to want to live our lives befitting the incredible gift we have received. It should be our desire to walk worthy of our calling, not because we have to, but because we want to and because it is the right thing to do.

In the rest of his letter to the Ephesians, Paul reminded them of ways that exemplified a worthy walk. We should take these instructions to heart and endeavor to live accordingly. Some of these exhortations have been addressed in this study, and all of them can be a subject of further Bible study.

- We should be humble and gentle (meek) toward one another (4:2).
- Through love, we should be patient and forbearing (showing tolerance and restraint) with one another (4:2).
- We should endeavor (be diligent) to preserve unity and peace among our fellow brethren (4:3).
- God has provided evangelists, pastors, and teachers to build up the body of Christ. Those who fill these positions should be careful how they build up the body of Christ and should properly equip the brethren to live for Christ so that we would have unity of the faith and of the knowledge of our Savior (4:11-13).
- We should grow up and be mature in Christ and not be like children swayed by false doctrine and deceitful men (4:13-14).
- We should speak the truth with each other in love so that we might become mature in all aspects in Christ (4:15).
- We are not to live as we did prior to salvation, which was in accordance with our sinful desires and was in ignorance of God and His ways (4:17-19).
- We are to put off our old self and put on our new self that God created for us and be renewed in the spirit of our mind (4:22-24).
- Again, we should speak the truth with each other (4:25).
- We should not be angry for the wrong reasons and, even when justified, we should not dwell on it and let it do harm (4:26).
- We should not behave in a way that allows Satan to serve his purposes (4:27).
- We should not steal; instead, should work on what is good with our own hands so that we are able to share with those in need (4:28).

- We should not speak improperly or badly toward each other; instead, we should speak in such a way that is good for edification (i.e., builds up, strengthens) and gives grace to those who hear (4:29).
- We should not do things that would grieve the Holy Spirit (4:30).
- We should not be bitter, angry, or vengeful toward one another, but should be kind, tender-hearted, and forgiving (4:31-32).
- As children of God, we should walk in love (5:1-2).
- We should not be known for, or associated with, immorality, impurity, greed, or filthy conversation or jokes, but rather we should be known for giving of thanks (5:3-4).
- We should not be deceived by empty words (i.e., false doctrine, false accusations) (5:6).
- We should live as children of light in all goodness, righteousness, and truth, and not according to the unfruitful deeds of darkness—sin (5:8-14).
- We should be careful to live wisely, making the most of our time in this evil day (5:15-16).
- We should not be foolish but understand the will of God (5:17).
- We should not get drunk but should be filled with the Holy Spirit (5:18).
- We should speak with one another in an uplifting manner (5:19).
- We should give thanks to God for all things (5:20).
- We should subject ourselves to each other by not being selfish (5:21).
- A wife should be subject (respectful, not selfish) to her husband as to the Lord (5:22-24).
- A husband should love his wife as he loves himself and as Christ loves the church (5:25-33).
- Children should obey and respect their parents in the Lord (6:1-2).
- Fathers should raise their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord but not provoke them to anger (6:4).
- We should be obedient and respectful to those in authority over us and work for them as for the Lord rather than just to please them (6:5-8).
- Those in a position of authority should be respectful and good to those in their charge and remember that our Lord is the Master of all of us (6:9).
- We should be strong in the Lord and put on the armor of God in order to stand firm against the schemes of Satan (6:10-17).
- We should pray for our fellow brethren so that they, too, would be strong in the Lord and walk worthy of their salvation (6:18-20).

The bar has been set very high, but this is what God wants from us. This is how we should live as His children in response to His love for us. May we all desire to understand the will of God and walk worthy of our salvation in Christ.

**For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. (Colossians 1:9-12)**

## Further Study

Of course, there are many more ways in which we ought to live and think in order to walk worthy of our calling as members of the body of Christ. We should endeavor to obey the following instructions and search the Scriptures to know and understand further just what God wants us to do.

- We should walk by the Spirit of God and not according to the desires of the flesh (Galatians 5:16-25; Romans 13:14). It should be our desire to live uprightly in the eyes of God instead of acting out our sinful desires by doing the very things for which the world will be judged by God.
- We should walk in the light and not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness (Ephesians 5:8-13; Romans 13:12-13).
- We should do good works for all people, and especially for believers (Galatians 6:10; Ephesians 2:10; 4:28; II Thessalonians 2:16-17; I Timothy 5:25; 6:18; II Timothy 3:16-17; Titus 2:7, 14). Although we may not see the results of our good works, or may even suffer ridicule or persecution on account of them, we should not lose heart in doing good (Galatians 6:9; II Thessalonians 3:13).
- We should stand fast in the truth of God and fight the good fight of faith; we should be workman who do not need to be ashamed (I Corinthians 15:58; Ephesians 6:10-17; I Timothy 1:18-19; II Timothy 2:15; 4:7). Standing fast does not mean we should be fighting causes—we are not exhorted nor are we able to change the world and make unbelievers understand and obey God. However, when confronted by sin or a sinful situation, including false doctrine, we should stand for the truth and be ready to suffer the consequences. The prophets, Christ, the twelve apostles, Paul, and many others suffered, often with death, for standing for the truth.
- We should humble ourselves before God and work out our salvation (Philippians 2:12-13). Working out our salvation does not mean saving ourselves—we are saved by the grace of God. Instead, it means to take hold of what we have in Christ and live accordingly; that is, to walk worthy of our calling.
- We should live honestly, and without hypocrisy (Matthew 6:5; Romans 12:9; Galatians 2:11-14; I Timothy 4:1-3; I Peter 2:1-3). The world is quick to observe and expose a hypocrite. Our walk in Christ should be an outward expression of the love of Christ in us; therefore, we need to understand the will of God (as revealed to us through His word) and apply it to our lives.
- We are ambassadors for Christ and should be faithful in that role (II Corinthians 5:20). In God's eyes, we are citizens of heaven; therefore, we are aliens in this world, which is the domain of Satan (Ephesians 2:1-3; 6:12; Galatians 1:4). Because we are in Christ and He is in us, we are His representatives on earth during this dispensation of grace.
- We should be content regardless of our circumstances (Philippians 4:11). We need to recognize that God is working all things out according to His will, and should take all our concerns to Him in prayer with thanksgiving (Philippians 2:13; 4:6-7).
- Our life should be an example to those around us (I Timothy 4:12).
- We should love and forgive others because God loves us and has forgiven us (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:12-14). We should show love and compassion toward others because of our Lord's love toward us (Ephesians 5:1-2).
- We should be subject to our governing authorities, because all authority is from God (Romans 13:1-7; I Peter 2:13-17; Proverbs 21:1). We should also pray for those in authority so that we



may live a quiet life in godliness and dignity (I Timothy 2:1-2).<sup>5</sup> It is our responsibility to God to obey the laws of the land unless those laws require us to sin. No government is godly, and God uses evil men to demonstrate His power (Romans 9:17); therefore, we must be true to God's word and be ready to suffer the consequences. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were among those who disobeyed their governing authorities over spiritual matters and were blessed by God for doing so (Daniel 3:1-18; 6:1-5).

Dick Johnson  
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<sup>5</sup> This passage does not mean that those in authority will be good to us if we pray for them. Instead, if we truly recognize that they are in authority by the will of God and pray for them as God desires for us to do, then we will experience the peace of God and will be better equipped to live for Christ whether those in authority are good or bad.