

Bible Basics Conference 2009: "Walk Worthy of the Calling!"

Part 15

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Place	Catford
Duration	00:25:15
Online version	https://www.audioteaching.org/en/sermons/cbb003/bible-basics-conference-2009-walk-worthy-of-the-calling

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[00:00:01] Perhaps we can start with a verse from Ephesians 4, verse 1, which actually is the verse that was chosen as a motto for this conference. Ephesians 4, verse 1, I, the prisoner in the Lord, exhort you therefore to walk worthy of the calling wherewith you have been called. Now what I'd like to attempt to do in a few minutes is just two things.

First one is to try and recap on the train of thought in chapters 1 to 3. And the second thing I'd like to do is give some examples where you see the connection between the practice that we heard about this afternoon in chapters 4, 5 and 6, between these practical things [00:01:04] and the doctrine. And as a little hint, watch out for the red font. On this verse here you have in red the calling, that's to do with the doctrine, chapters 1 to 3. And then you have also in red the walk, and that's to do with the practice. And that will give you a little hint about those examples where I'll try to show the connection between the two.

Now just very quickly then about the first three chapters. In chapter 1, and you remember, I hope you remember a little bit of what we had in the first two sessions. We said the subject is God's purpose, and we've tried to see what this meant. Now if we had to summarize this in one sentence, what actually was God's purpose? The thought that impressed me was [00:02:07] the following. God looked at his Son, at Christ who had accomplished the work on the cross and who was risen from the dead, and said, I cannot and I do not want to withhold any blessing for him. And he said, and whatever I give to my Son as risen man, I want to give to those whom I have chosen. Can you imagine that? I think it's something that would never have come into any human mind, that everything that God can give to Christ after being fully satisfied with him, that he wants all of those things to be shared by us. Just for example, [00:03:01] Christ as risen man is still the Son of God. Now that's why God said, I want you to be my sons. Now that is perhaps as a very brief summary God's purpose. He said, I cannot withhold any blessings with regard to those who are taken into favour because I see them in my Son. You remember the phrase, accepted or taken into favour in the Beloved. That's the purpose we looked at or the calling in chapter 1. And this was followed, you will remember that Brother Hugh spoke about this prayer where Paul actually said, what we need is eyes of our hearts which are enlightened, which can actually see these things and which can enjoy these things. Now these things being [00:04:04] mainly to the calling and the inheritance. Really Christ is the heir. But again, God says, you know, if my Son, risen man, if he is heir, I want you to be heirs as well. So the inheritance is shared as well. And the third thing that Paul prayed for was that we might know the power. Now that

almost takes us to chapter 2 because this is the power which God actually used in the execution of this purpose. Now again, we had two sessions on this chapter and you will remember that Brother Mark spoke about the material that God used. We called it, the chapter title we chose was God's masterpiece. And part 1 was about the material and what we saw was that the material God had [00:05:04] and God chose to use was absolutely dreadful. He didn't choose angels. What he chose was people who are described as dead and as remote, far, and dead to make it worse in trespasses and sin.

Completely unsuitable, you might think, building material. And that's what God takes to bring about his purpose, which by the way, just in case that wasn't clear in what I said a minute ago, is his purpose that he has always had from before the foundation of the world. Now part 2 of that chapter was then the outcome. What has God made now of this building material, of these people who were dead in trespasses and sins? Well, he's made two things of them. One is one new man. We [00:06:08] thought a little bit about this point already, this new man. Before this, there was the people of Israel and there was a middle wall of partition and then there were the Gentiles and those were separated. But now God has joined them together and made them into one new man. But it is a peculiar description, isn't it? A new man. And it makes you think again about the fact that for God, there is one person who is at the center of his heart and all his thoughts, and that's his son. Now you know, when God's son was on this earth, God could look at him and say, actually with him, I am well pleased. Now God's son is no longer here as man. But there is a moral continuation.

[00:07:06] There is still a new man here. And this new man is the assembly of which Christ is the head, and it is, you might say, the moral continuation of Christ in this world. Secondly, actually Brother Paul spoke about this. We have been formed into a holy temple. Again, God has done the unthinkable, taking this useless material and making it into a temple so that he could dwell there. In other words, that there would be immediate proximity that God would actually choose this church as his dwelling place. Now then, chapter three. Now that we've seen the content of the purpose and the [00:08:03] execution of the purpose, you come to the communication of the purpose. When you have an important life event, perhaps for a while you'll just keep very quiet. And then a little later you will tell your best friends, and only they will know. And then there will be a moment when you may make it public, and then everybody can know about this thing or plan. Now with God, we were reminded by Brother Andrew that he always had this plan, but it was a top secret. It was not communicated. It was a mystery. Moses didn't know about it, and David didn't know about it, but Paul says, now it has been revealed to these two classes, the apostles and the prophets. And [00:09:02] this could only be done after the work of redemption had been accomplished, and the church had been formed, and then God communicated this great plan. And it was Paul's task, in particular, to actually then go and preach this, which had been revealed to him and to other apostles and prophets. And then we came to the bridge, and Brother Robert had this beautiful picture of a bridge, and spoke about the bridge between the doctrine on the one hand, and the practical walk on the other hand. And he pointed out that the key to all this was really this phrase in that prayer that Christ would dwell in their hearts. He said, it's a matter of affection. And I think it's a matter of affection for two things. It's a matter of affection to learn the truth, and it is [00:10:06] a matter of affection to then go and practice the truth. Now that's, as briefly as I can, the train of thought in the first three chapters, which the various speakers have presented to us. And then you come to the walk. In the world, they say we shouldn't only talk the talk, we should also walk the walk. Brother Brian chose a phrase that I liked even more. He said, we should be living the calling. Now, if you studied the invitation to this conference, you will have found that on there, there were actually seven verses quoted, seven references from Ephesians that all talk about the Christian walk. I just mention this because sometimes you hear, actually, I'm not

interested [00:11:04] in Ephesians, that's high truth. It's far too complicated for me. Well, actually, it's about our steps. It's very much about our walk. Just look at these references here very quickly. In chapter two, verse two, Paul reminds the Ephesians that they had a different past. In time past, ye walked according to the course of this world. Then later on, in verse ten, still chapter two, he says, actually, God has prepared good works for you. So really, even if we do good works now, it's still God's work because he has prepared them beforehand for us. But then most of the references are in the second part. Four verse one, our key verse, walk worthy of the calling, and we'll come back to this. Four verse seventeen, and this is again something which might strike [00:12:08] you as surprising. In an epistle where you have learned about things like election, adoption, the calling, the mystery, God's will, suddenly you get exhortations which are so down to earth, and you might have thought, well, actually, do the Ephesians need that? And evidently, they did. And evidently, we do. It says, walk not as other Gentiles walk. It can happen for a Christian that he lives and behaves in a way that it becomes very hard to distinguish him from somebody who is not a Christian, and that's always a bad sign. Five verse two, walk in love. Five [00:13:01] verse eight, walk as children of light. And five fifteen, walk circumspectly. I just want to make this point. The walk is a central thought in Ephesians. Now, let's look at some examples which show that you can't actually separate those two parts. Perhaps you say, look, I listen to the MP3 files, but I'll only download the second half. First half, too difficult. I'll skip that. If I just get the practice, I'll do fine. Well, I'm glad if you listen to those MP3s. They were very good. But I don't think you can separate the practice from the walk. And I'll give you some examples now. Number one, Ephesians four verse three, it says, using diligence to keep the unity of the spirit in the uniting bond of peace. There is one body. Now, we actually had a question about [00:14:09] this during the conference. What does it mean to keep the unity of the spirit? And it was explained that the spirit made the unity of the body, but now the spirit wants to bring about a practical unity amongst us. And this is something that happens locally, and it happens beyond that. And we would like to walk together because this is in harmony with the principle of the one body. So for example, this morning in Plumstead, we received a brother who was only, I don't know, 15 or 16 years old, and he broke bread with us. And he wasn't from Plumstead. Now, how could we do this? Well, this brother is from a group of believers, a meeting that we know in Lowestoft. And they confirmed to us, actually, this brother is in fellowship. Now, if we did not receive him, [00:15:08] surely it would not be in line with an endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit. Actually, the Lord himself said, what you bind on earth is bound in heaven, and what you loose on earth is loosed in heaven. Now, what is the reason given for this? There is one body. And here you have this first sort of flashback to the doctrinal part, chapter one, where we learn about the church, that actually she is the body of Christ, and referred to as the one who is the fullness of him that fills all in all. So again, we can't separate the two. Now, here's another example, which I find actually very striking. Ephesians 4.25, wherefore, having put our falsehood, [00:16:04] speak truth everyone with his neighbor, because we are members of one another. Very down-to-earth example. My brother asked me a question. I'm not keen to give a straight answer. I know I shouldn't lie, but I could say something that kind of leads him to believe what isn't quite right. And I could say, well, actually, I haven't said a lie. Now, look at what Paul says. Speak the truth everyone with his neighbor. That's not the man living in the house next to you, but it's just the brother or sister you have to do with, because it says, because we are members one of another. You find that suddenly Paul brings in truth again from the doctrinal part. He says, actually, we are one body, [00:17:01] and if we are members of one another, we work together. My eye sees the glass, my hand takes the glass, and I can drink, and my members work together. Now, if we are members one of another, how could one member try to actually mislead another? Example number three. Ephesians 4, verse 30, and do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God with which you have been sealed for the day of redemption. Now, actually, I should have marked two things red here. There is the expression of sealing, and there is the expression of the day of redemption, and both of

these take us back to Ephesians 1, verse 14. Paul had been speaking about the inheritance, and he says, actually, [00:18:04] you've got the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is the seal. You have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, and then he said the Holy Spirit is also the earnest. It's the guarantee that on this day of redemption, when you redeem your check, so to speak, you will get the inheritance. Now, Paul becomes very practical here. He says, you know, you've been sealed with this Holy Spirit. You study chapter one, you find it's a wonderful blessing, and you enjoy it. Now he becomes practical. He says, if you go to the disco, and you are a child of God, then because you are sealed with the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit dwells in you and has no choice but to go with you into the [00:19:04] disco, and that means the Holy Spirit will be grieved. Wherever we go, the Holy Spirit goes with us, and Paul says, remember this, you have been sealed. It is an immense privilege. It is eternal security, but do not grieve the Holy Spirit. Example number four, and be kind one to another, compassionate, forgiving one another, so as God in Christ has forgiven you. Now, again, a flashback to chapter one, verse seven, where it says that actually we have the redemption, we have the forgiveness. God has forgiven us, and this should be the character of our forgiveness, not grudging forgiveness. He said, sorry, I've got to forgive him. Now, God had the disposition. It was his greatest desire was to be able to forgive us, and this should be our attitude in relation to [00:20:05] a Christian forgiveness. I thought I would only need 20 minutes, but I hope to finish in about two. Example number five, be ye therefore imitators of God as beloved children and walk in love. Now, you might say, this is a bit of a tough call here, imitators of God. Perhaps I could try and be an imitator of my parents or an imitator of some brother, but an imitator of God. How am I going to go about that? Well, you go about that exactly as a little child imitates its parents. Now, how can you do this? Flashback to chapter one. God has given us a new nature. We are holy and blameless before him, and because he has given us the new nature, we now can be imitators of God.

Example, actually two examples, numbers six and seven and one. Ephesians 5, 22 to 25. Wives, [00:21:14] submit yourselves to your own husbands as to the Lord, for a husband is the head of the wife, as also the Christ is head of the assembly. Husbands, love your own wives, even as Christ also has loved the assembly. Don't need to say much about this because Brother Rusty has explained this this afternoon. It's connected with what we had in chapter one, in the doctrinal part, where it said Christ is given as head to the church. And then we learned in chapter five, and by the way, the last three chapters also contain some doctrine. And they teach us, for example, that Christ loved the church. And again, a matter which is extremely practical, [00:22:03] day-to-day living in a Christian marriage is founded on really God's counsel presented earlier in the epistle. And my final example is from chapter six, verse 12, because our struggle is not against blood and flesh, but against principalities, against authorities, against the universal laws of darkness, against spiritual power of wickedness in the heavenlies. Now, let me just ask you this. If you skipped chapters one to three, and you came to this verse here, what would you make of this battle in the heavenlies? I dare to suggest that you wouldn't have a clue if you had never read chapters one to three. And it just shows that, you know, if you want to engage in Christian battle, as we should, we need to have an understanding of what [00:23:01] these places are. We need to have an understanding of chapters one to three, and we know that actually that's where our blessings are. That's the first clue. It's where Christ is, second hint. It's where we are seated. It's where the angels are. And now you have an idea, ah, if I want to enjoy my spiritual blessings, actually, I need to fight this fight, which Brother Simon has been speaking about. Now, perhaps that might suffice. I'm sure there are many more examples that you can search out, but it was just to demonstrate the point. We can't take apart these two sides of this epistle. And just as a final comment for those who might be tempted to think the doctrine is too difficult. I've heard it said doctrine is too difficult for the young people. And I think we might do our [00:24:01] young people some injustice if we say that, because they are quite capable. They can tell

you about MP3s and MP4s and Bluetooth and iPods and iPhones and apps and killer apps and all those things. If you don't know any of these things, don't worry. It's not important. I'm just saying the young people can pick up new information almost at the speed of light. Now, therefore, it's really, and that was brought out as well, to a large extent a matter of our will. Are we willing to sacrifice half an hour or an hour a day with good energy to exploring these wonderful things? So the Christian walk is founded on God's truth. And perhaps we can close with this final verse from chapter 6. Grace with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in corruption. And [00:25:09] perhaps a brother has a hymn or a prayer.