



With all humility  
and gentleness  
with patience  
bearing with  
one another  
in love

### **Ephesians 4:1-7**

*I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is **one** body and **one** Spirit—just as you were called to the **one** hope that belongs to your call— 5 **one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism, 6 **one** God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. 7 But grace was given to **each one** of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.*



If you are visiting a prison, are you allowed to bring a gun in with you? Just ask Jim Boisen how long you'd last. This week a friend on facebook posted this photo of a prison along with the following message.

“Don't tell anybody but I'm carrying a loaded 66 into this place.”

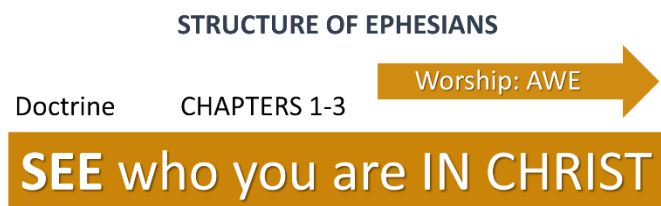
I know what a 38 special is and I know what a 44 Magnum is, but do you know what a

loaded 66 is? He was referring to the Bible and its 66 books. Many of you know Jack Hagar from Bible quizzing. Jack is an energetic, 70 something youth worker who also regularly visits prisons. In fact, he recently started a Bible quizzing ministry in a prison. Jack has spent a lot of time in prisons, most of them on the wrong side of bars. Jack spent ten years in a federal prison for drug trafficking but it was there that he was radically saved by picking up the Bible and reading it. He says that it was God's word and God's Spirit that miraculously saved him in prison. Now he works full-time with Youth for Christ and also does prison ministry.

Jack is doing great things in prison now but he definitely deserved to spend time behind bars. He often says, “If you're old enough to do the crime, you're old enough to do the time.” He regrets his past life but he is grateful that God used prison to turn him into a new creation.

Jack deserved to be in prison but Paul did not deserve to be there. But Paul did not exactly sit around and twiddle his thumbs in his jail cell. Paul wrote this letter to the church in Ephesus while he was in prison and he also wrote Galatians, Philippians and Colossians. You have to appreciate Paul’s perspective when he called himself a “prisoner for the Lord.” The Romans were the ones who locked him up but he served his time “for the Lord.” Even prison could not slow down his message.

This chapter and the first verse of chapter four is a key turning point in all of Ephesians. Remember when I said last week how important purpose clauses can be? Whenever you see—therefore, so that, because of, for this reason—you are about to hit on a key truth. All purpose clauses are important but some are more important than others. The “therefore” in verse one is the linch pin between chapters 1-3 and chapters 3-4.



*I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.* “The calling to which you have been called” is all of the vital truths and immense blessings found in chapters 1-3.



I have showed you this diagram several times before but it should start to make more sense as we enter the second half of Ephesians. The first three chapters were

mostly centered on doctrine and dealt with predestination, adoption, election, redemption, forgiveness, riches in grace, eternal inheritance, salvation, sanctification, and on and on it goes. All of these truths are about seeing who we are in Christ. As I said last Sunday, we need the proper motivation to serve God and serve others. Fear, shame and guilt are horrible motivators. They work, which is why people use them but in the long run, they are destructive.

Yet as believers we must be actively serving. We can’t just do nothing. We can’t merely do whatever we want and call it good. There is a price to pay, as it were. That’s why Paul said “I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.” Walking is Paul’s common euphemism for obedience. There is a path of obedience that God has laid out for us and we need to walk in that path. So we are to walk in a worthy manner. The “worthy manner” is the standard by which we walk and obey.

In chapters 4-6, Paul will list the standards in detail. Don’t steal. Don’t lie. Forgive one another. Love your wives. Obey your parents. The commands are going to get tough. The Lord has very high standards, very high expectations for his people. In many ways, the next three chapters are detailed expressions of the Ten Commandments, as are all Biblical commands ultimately. These are all things we should be doing. But there are two enormous questions about obeying God’s commands. Why and how? As you might guess, the answers to these questions are all of one piece.

Why should we do them? Just like we talked about last week, it all gets back to motivation. Do we obey God out of fear, guilt and shame like most of the world? Last week I poked fun at Baptist guilt and other forms of Christian guilt. But all religions throughout the world are based on fear, guilt and shame. Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, Animists, ancestor worship—they all practice their religion out of a fear of punishment.

World religions and most of Christianity have fear, guilt and shame as their source of motivation. It would be so easy to fall into that same trap but Paul will not allow such. *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.* If you want motivation, look back to chapters 1-3. Now I understand that it's difficult to have all three chapters in mind at once, so allow me to summarize much of it in some bigger ideas.

1. You are not the same person.

Paul explains this so clearly in 2 Corinthians. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." In Ephesians, Paul uses election, adoption, redemption, salvation and more. These are all different aspects of our salvation, all of which explain how different we are now. We were dead in our sins and transgressions but now we are made alive.

2. You do not have the same destiny.

Believers have an eternal inheritance sealed by the Holy Spirit. Heaven is your home. We are already seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus.

3. You are fully accepted by God.

You have been adopted as son and daughters of the king. Salvation is so much more than just escaping the flames of hell. It is an intensely relational process. Jesus told that the Pharisees that the devil was their father and that would be true of all unbelievers. The Father himself signed your adoption papers with the blood of his Son. You belong to Him. He is your daddy.

4. You have a new family.

The dividing wall of hostility between Jews and Gentiles has been destroyed by the cross. They are no longer enemies. Rather, all believers in every generation throughout the world are united into one body, into one family. There is no such thing as a lone ranger Christian. Along with your new Father, you have new brothers and sisters in Christ and they will be your family for all eternity.

5. You have immeasurable love of God.

Of course, this was the final prayer in chapter 3, that we might know the love of God that surpasses knowledge that we might be filled to the fulness of God. As I said last Sunday, God wants us to continue to lean into this love and plumb its depth, height, length and breadth. It is inexhaustible. To know this love is like taking a bite out of infinity. The more bites you take, the more there is to consume. His love is so vast that it requires divine power to take those bites.

Speaking of taking bites, a couple weeks ago Karen I went to Le Chateau in La Crosse because we had been given a gift card. The steak I had was one of the best I have ever eaten. If it's a really good steak, the first few bites are always the best, am I right? But as you fill up on your

baked potato, vegetable and bread, the last few bites aren't quite as amazing as the first few. But when it comes to the love of God, understood rightly, the bites of unsurpassing knowledge of God are intended to get better and better. The experience does not diminish but has the potential to increase over time.

6. You have immeasurable power available to you.

In chapter one Paul prayed that we would know that we have “the immeasurable greatness of his power.” This power is for fighting against sin, for loving and serving others and for understanding God and his word more fully. God calls us to a high standard but he also gives us the power to meet this standard.

These and others represent “the calling to which we have been called.” These truths don't just change the way we think. They have changed who we are. Think of yourself without any of these things and then ponder the gift that each of them is and the full measure of gifts and blessings.

There are several powerful motivators that come from these truths. The first is humility. It is humbling to receive gifts that you feel you don't deserve. We had a strong storm this past week which tore down some limbs and trees. But that doesn't hold a candle to the tornadoes that hit Viola back in 2005. The wind picked up the garage next to the Farrells and set it down on top of their house. I remember Tim being so humbled by the outpouring of help from church people and others. In a much greater way, the calling to which we have been called should bring us to our knees in humility.

Humility will then lead to gratitude. It always does, which makes perfect sense if you think about it. If you truly know that you have been given a great gift and that you did not deserve it—that's the humility part—then you cannot help but be grateful.

Now compare sources of motivation. On the one hand you have fear, shame and guilt and on the other hand you have gratitude and humility. Which do you think has more lasting power? Sadly, fear, shame and guilt are powerful motivators but they end up taking more from you than they give. They can keep you in line but they leech life from you.

On the other hand, true gratitude looks like this clip from [Toy Story](#). Mr. Potato Head did not appreciate the annoying green aliens who continually tell him, “You have saved our lives. We are eternally grateful.” But in a pure sense, this is what gratitude toward the Lord looks like. We are overcome with gratitude for being eternally saved and we want to serve our Savior. Gratitude makes you want to pledge your service to the one who rescued you.

Grateful that I am not the same person. Grateful that I have a new destiny. Grateful that I am fully accepted by God. Grateful that I have new family. Grateful that I have the immeasurable love of God. And grateful that through the Holy Spirit, I have immeasurable power within me.

All of this is rolled into Paul's opening verse. *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called...* We have been given all of these amazing gifts and in light of that, we are called to action. There is much work to be done. We must act and serve in a way that is worthy of this calling.


Now let me zero in on this word worthy for a moment. Worthy does not mean that you somehow have to show that we were worthy of these gifts and blessings. That's a little bit like how the greens aliens felt. They owed Mr. Potato Head a debt of gratitude. There was a debt that had to be repaid by serving their rescuer. The only way to pay the debt is to work it off, to show that they were actually worthy of being saved. You can and must throw that notion out the window. That is for certain not what this means. That would be equivalent to earning your salvation. As good evangelicals, we all know that you cannot earn your salvation before you are saved. But sometimes we fall into the trap of trying to show ourselves worthy of God loving us. We were not worthy, we are not worthy now and if we lived a million lifetimes, we would never be worthy of his gifts.

To be worthy of the calling means that our lives reflect the change and blessings given to us. We appear to be grateful because we are grateful. Parents, when you give your children birthday presents, how would you like for them to respond? You would like to hear a "thank you" or two, wouldn't you? It would be nice to know that they appreciated their gifts.

When I was a kid, my dad would video parts of Christmas morning with his Super 8 camera. You could only fit 2 minutes of video on one of those long rolls of film so every home movie is a series of 10-15 second segments. That's why old home movies seem so choppy. There's one of me and my sister coming down the steps on Christmas morning. I see the closest present and literally tear into it. The wrapper is off in 3 seconds. Then you see my sliding the box out of the way and tearing into the next present. I looked like an absolutely wild child and worst of all, there was not a hint of gratitude.

So we would like our children to be grateful for our gifts to them but it does not occur to us that they should be worthy of our gifts. We don't give them a few Christmas presents and then expect them to be worthy of those gifts. "Alright kids, out in the barn right now to prove yourselves worthy of our gifts!" In this verse worthy means that our lives would look like we have been changed. In other words, does our daily lives look like we have much gratitude? Do we have an attitude that would say to the Lord, "You have saved our lives. We are eternally grateful"? Are we walking in a manner worthy of God's calling and gifts? Not out of fear, shame and guilt, but out of humility, gratitude and love.

**STRUCTURE OF EPHESIANS**

Doctrine    CHAPTERS 1-3     Worship: AWE

**SEE who you are IN CHRIST**

Application    CHAPTERS 4-6     Worship: SERVE

**BE who you are IN CHRIST**

This brings us back to this diagram. Verses 1-2 are the link between seeing who we are in Christ and being who we are in Christ. Since you have been changed and blessed, therefore live in such a way that represents what has been done for you. Remember, there are two words for worship in the New Testament. One means to worship as in bowing down, giving God total praise. This is basically what a worship service is or what you do

in your personal devotions.

The second word for worship means to serve. And you can see how the first leads to the second. If you are overwhelmed with what God has done to you and for you, it is only natural that you would want to serve him.

John MacArthur had a professor in seminary who gave him some great advice. “The whole Christian life, John, the whole Christian life is simply becoming what you are. It's simply becoming what you are. This is who you are and this is how you are to live. Living up to who you are.”<sup>1</sup>

This is so absolutely vital to understand because not only does the rest of the book of Ephesians rest on this understanding but so does our entire Christian lives. If you get this wrong, you are left with one of two basic paths. Either you will give up in total frustration because you can't live up to God's standards or else you will get twisted up in the performance trap.

I'd like to close with a story about Dave Hart. Most of you know Dave pretty well but did you know that he was converted not once, but twice? In his late thirties and early forties, Dave had an experience with the grace of God that felt like a second conversion to him.

Dave was raised in an environment where grace was non-existent and legalism ruled the day. They were always expected to be in church—their certain kind of church. If you went on vacation, you had to go to a place where their church was located. You were expected to only marry someone from that fellowship. They all thought they were superior to all other churches and all other Christians. They and they alone were pleasing to God. Dave said that that he did not have much of a relationship with Christ as a person, rather he had a relationship with doctrines.

Dave visited a Baptist church one day—which itself was a no-no—and had a chance conversation with an older gentleman. The man said, “My wife's been away all day, and so I just spent the day with the Lord, him and me.” What this man said had struck Dave as so incredibly genuine. Dave realized that his relationship with God was not like this at all.

He went home and told Sandy about conversation. That night or next night, in the middle of the night, the Lord woke him up and he started reading his Bible. The Lord brought that conversation back to his mind. The Lord said to him, “This is the kind of person you have had a superior attitude about all these years.” Dave realized that it was an enormous sin against Christ and against his body. In many ways he had been deceived, but he had also willingly participated in it. Dave wept that night.

Here's a tough part of the story. Dave was in full-time ministry within that church fellowship and to leave it meant losing his job. But once he crossed that point of no return, a lack of job did not stop him. Dave said that this whole experience was like a second conversion for him. Leaving that fellowship was like a Muslim getting saved and leaving all that they had ever known. But he said there was no going back after that. He had experienced grace. He tasted the immeasurable love of God and got an enormous dose of humility. Dave finally realized who he was that day and began to become who he was instead of pretending to be someone he never had been. He could not have been who he was in Christ because he had not yet seen who he was in Christ.

This is your motivation. This is your source of power. This is the joy of your salvation. This is what it means *you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love.*

**Rich Maurer**  
**July 16, 2017**

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<https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/1919/the-lowly-walk-part-1>