
The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON LXV : UNITY AND DIVERSITY WITHIN THE CONGREGATION OF BELIEVERS (4: 1-16)

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. (KJV)

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit — just as you were called to one hope when you were called — one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.” (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (NIV)

Call upon you, then, do I – the prisoner of the Lord – to walk worthily of the calling with which ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of the peace; one body and one Spirit, according as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who [is] over all, and through all, and in you all, and to each one of you was given the grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ, wherefore, he saith, ‘Having gone up on high he led captive captivity, and gave gifts to men,’ – and that, he went up, what is it except that he also went down first to the lower parts of the earth? he who went down is the same also who went up far above all the heavens, that He may fill all things – and He gave some [as] apostles, and some [as] prophets, and some [as] proclaimers of good news, and some [as] shepherds and teachers, unto the perfecting of the saints, for a work of ministration, for a building up of the body of the Christ, till we may all come to the unity of the faith and of the recognition of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to a measure of stature of the fullness of the Christ, that we may no more be babes, tossed and borne about by every wind of the teaching, in the sleight of men, in craftiness, unto the artifice of leading astray, and, being true in love, we may increase to Him [in] all things, who is the head – the Christ; from whom the whole body, being fitly joined together and united, through the supply of every joint, according to the working in the measure of each single part, the increase of the body doth make for the building up of itself in love. (Young’s Literal Translation)

“When a person joins an organization, he obligates himself to live and act in accordance with the standards of the group. He accepts its aims, objectives, and standards as his own. A citizen is obligated to abide by the laws of his country. An employee is obligated to work according to the rules, standards, and purposes of his company. Members of service clubs obligate themselves to promote the goals of the club and to abide by its standards. When someone joins an athletic team he is obligated to play as the coach orders and according to the rules of the sport. Human society could not operate without such obligation.

“We have a natural desire to be accepted and to belong, and many people will go to almost any lengths to qualify for acceptance in a fraternal order, social club, athletic team, or other group. Many people will also go to great lengths to keep from being rejected by a group. The parents of the man born blind were afraid to tell the Jewish leaders that Jesus had healed their son, because they were afraid of being thrown out of the synagogue (John 9:22). Although they had seen the result of a miracle that had healed their own son of his life-long blindness, they would not credit Jesus with the miracle for fear of being socially ostracized. For the same

reason, ‘many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God’ (12:42-43).

“Sometimes in the church such loyalties to standards and fear of ostracism do not operate with the same force. Too many Christians are glad to have the spiritual security, blessings, and promises of the gospel but have too little sense of responsibility in conforming to its standards and obeying its commands.” [MacArthur, 115f]

“The revelation of the unification of Jewish and Gentile believers positionally as ‘one new person’ (2:15), the body of Christ, and the prayer that this unity would result in a mutual experience of Christ’s love (3:16-19) leads Paul to demonstrate the manner of walk expected of this unified body. This can only be accomplished by God’s own power through the ministry of gifted believers who Christ gives to the church. The purpose is to bring all the members of the body to the unity of faith and to the full stature of Christ with the result that they will be a stable and growing body in living union with Christ the head.”
[Hoehner, p501]

PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE

v. 1 reminds us again that Paul is a prisoner and employs one of his favorite phrases for introducing ethical instruction:

¹ *I call upon you (or, I beseech you, I exhort you), I, the prisoner of Christ (“I” is emphatic),
to live worthy of the calling with which you were called,*

vv. 2,3 set out in a general way how readers are to respond if the unity of the church is to be preserved:

² *with all humility (or, lowliness) and gentleness (or, meekness),*

with patience (or, long-suffering),

paying attention (or, ‘bearing with, forbearing, showing tolerance’) to one another in love,

³ *working zealously (or, ‘making every effort, giving diligence, endeavoring, being eager’) to preserve (or, maintain, keep) the unity of the Spirit*

by means of the peace that binds (or, by the bond of peace, in the bond of peace).

vv. 4-6 pick up the theme of unity, providing a series of declarations in each of which unity is stressed through the use of the word ‘one’ and God’s total government through the use of ‘all’ (v. 4 contains no verb and simply begins ‘one body and one Spirit...’; the words ‘there is’ are often added for the sake of a smoother translation):

⁴ *One body and
one Spirit*

just as you were also called in one hope of your calling (or, to the one hope of your calling),

⁵ *one Lord,
one faith,*

one baptism,

⁶ *one God and Father of all*

who is over all (or, above all)

and through all

and in all.

vv. 7-16 speaks to diversity within the unity; some of what makes us differ is our gifts as distributed by the sovereign hand of Jesus Christ Himself. In vv. 7-10 Paul begins with a proof-text showing Christ has the right to dispense gifts as He wills:

⁷ *However grace has been given to each one of us (‘but, however’ is a subtle change and not a ‘strong adversative’, what one commentator called a ‘transitional contrast’)*

in accordance with the measure of the gift of Christ (or, in the proportion allotted by Christ’s giving);

⁸ *therefore it says:*

Ascending on high he led captives captive (or, when he ascended on high he led captivity captive, he led a host of prisoners captive);

he gave gifts to men.

⁹ *And what significance has ‘He ascended’*

unless he also descended [first] into the lower regions,

that is, the earth? (or, into the lower regions of the earth)

¹⁰ *He who descended is himself also the one who ascended above all the heavens,
so that he might fill all things. (or, to fill everything, to fill the cosmos, to fill the universe)*

Having earned the right to dispense gifts as He pleases, Paul shows what Christ gave (v. 11) and why (vv. 12-16):

¹¹ *And he himself gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, some to be shepherds and teachers,*

Although there are questions on the syntax of v. 12, it most likely describes three aspects of the purpose of these gifts:

¹² *for the equipping of the saints (or, for perfecting the saints, for bringing the saints to completion)*

for the work of the ministry,

for the building up of the body of Christ,

(Those disagreeing with the above syntax believes the verse should be written as follows:

¹² *for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry,*

for the building up of the body of Christ)

A temporal clause ('until') further clarifies in terms of the goal, using again three prepositional phrases:

¹³ *until we all attain (or, arrive at)*

into the unity of faith and knowledge of the son of God,

into a mature male (literal; but the sense is 'to a mature person' in contrast with 'immature children' in the next verse),

into the measure (or, to the standard) of the stature (or, the age, the maturity) of fullness of Christ,

This purpose is now described first negatively (v. 14) and then positively (v. 15). Negatively, there is a need to move away from the present immaturity:

¹⁴ *in order that (hina) we may no longer (or, cease) be very young children (or, infants, babes),*

tossed back and forth by the waves,

and blown here and there by every wind of teaching,

in the craftiness of men (or, in human cunning), in craftiness (or, by trickery) towards the scheming of error (or, in deceitful scheming, plotting),

Positively we are to grow up into our Head, Jesus Christ:

¹⁵ *rather speaking truth in love (or, by 'truthing'; the sense may not be limited to verbal use only)*

let us grow in every respect unto him,

who is the head, Christ,

Paul concludes by summarizing the already mentioned purposes of the growth and building up of the body, while underlining the fact that these processes have their source in Christ and require the activity of each part of the body:

¹⁶ *from whom the whole body,*

fitted and held together (or, joined and brought together)

through every ligament of supply (or, gives supply),

makes bodily growth

according to the activity in proportion of each individual part,

achieves bodily growth

into its own building up in love (or, for the purpose of building itself up in love).

V. 1 — Therefore — οὖν [oun] — LINKS TO PREVIOUS CHAPTERS — “A strong connection is made through [‘therefore’] (cf Rom 12.1; 1 Th 4.1; Col 3.1) with the preceding three chapters.... [Paul] has told his readers of their redemption in Christ with whom they have been raised and sit in the heavenlies so that although once Gentiles they now have equal place with Jews in the Church, the body of Christ. Their behaviour, to which the remainder of the letter will be devoted, should correspond with their position. 4.1 thus governs all that follows; the ‘good works’ of 2.10 are now to be detailed.”

[Best, 359f; see also Abbott, 104; Lincoln, 234] *“The sense of the word ‘therefore’ in this place, is, ‘Such being your exalted privileges; since God has done so much for you; since he has revealed for you such a glorious system; since he has bestowed on you the honour of calling you into his kingdom, and making you partakers of his mercy, I entreat you to live in accordance with these elevated privileges, and to show your sense of his goodness by devoting your all to his service.’”* [Barnes’ NT Notes]

BEGINS WITH THE SAME THREE WORDS ELSEWHERE — Paul uses this exact same phrase in two other places:

‘Therefore I urge you, imitate me.’ (1Co 4:16 NKJV)

‘I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.’ (Rom 12:1 NKJV)

I beseech you, I exhort you — Παρακαλῶ ὑμᾶς [parakalō humas] — **A FRIENDLY YET FIRM APPEAL** — “The three main senses of this verb are:

- **to comfort** (Matt 2:18; 5:4; Luke 16:25; Acts 20:12; 2 Cor 1:4; 7:6-7, 13; Eph 6:22; Co12:2; 4:8; 1 Thess 3:7; 2 Thess 2:17);
- **to appeal, entreat, request** (Matt 8:5; 14:36; 18:32; Mark 1:40; 5:18, 23; 6:56; Luke 8:41; 2 Cor 9:5; 12:8, 18); and
- **to exhort** (Luke 3:18; Acts 2:40; Rom 12:1; 2 Cor 10:1; Phil 4:2; 1 Thess 4:1; 1 Pet 2:11; 5:1).

The third use fits best here, since Paul’s use of [‘walk’] as an imperative in 5:2, 8 reinforces the idea ‘to exhort.’ This use not only gives it a sense of urgency but also a note of authority. This is borne out by Paul’s use of the personal pronoun ‘I,’ which gives it greater emphasis and the reminder that he was ‘the prisoner in the Lord’ for their sake. Most of the versions translate the word as ‘beseech’ (AV, RV, ASV), ‘beg’ (RSV, NRSV), ‘urge’ (TEV, JB, NIV, NJB), or ‘entreat’ (NASB). These translations seem to be a little too mild, implying that Paul is pleading for a favor. Thus, although the verb can have more than one English meaning, it seems the context demands the primary idea of exhortation. This conclusion is viable even though Paul is addressing fellow believers because friendship does not exclude authoritative exhortation. In fact, his close relationship to the readers makes the exhortation all the more effective.” [Hoehner, p503] *“[The Greek word for ‘exhort’] has a range of meanings; in the present context we can exclude those relating to comforting and consoling. [‘I exhort you’] was an epistolary formula sometimes used by those in authority writing to others whom for diplomatic reasons they did not wish to order. It is thus weaker and more friendly than ‘command’, ‘instruct’ (cf Philem 8ff). Paul uses it regularly writing, for example, from the position of a parent (1 Th 2.7).... The meaning here lies in the area, ‘beseech, exhort’, yet also carrying latent or implicit authority which [‘I’] serves to stress. Normally Paul associates ‘brother’ with the phrase (Rom 12.1; 15.32; 16.17; 1 Cor 16.15; 1 Th 4.10; 5.14) but this is a word which is lacking as an address in Ephesians. Its absence enhances the authority and diminishes the friendliness of the phrase.”* [Best, 360] “By his use of the term [‘I exhort’], Paul also signals that the ethical advice to follow in 4:1–6:20 is given in the context of friendship. This becomes clear from the definition he gives to the term in a letter to his friend and coworker Philemon, written at virtually the same time as Ephesians:

‘For this reason, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do your duty, yet I would rather appeal [‘parakalo’] to you on the basis of love — and I, Paul, do this as an old man, and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus. I am appealing [‘parakalo’] to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprisonment’ (Philem. 8-10 NRSV).

[Note by comparison: 1 Thess. 4:1, where Paul couples [exhort, ‘parakalo’] with [ask, ‘erotao’] to give his instructions a friendly nuance:

‘We ask [‘erotomen’] and appeal [‘parakalo’] to you in the Lord Jesus that just as you received instructions from us about how it is necessary to walk [‘peripatein’] and to please God (just as you are doing), you do so even more.’]

The advice Paul gives in Eph. 4:1-6:20, like the advice he gives to Philemon concerning Onesimus, is issued to friends. He does not know all of his audience personally, but he knows their situation well enough to be thankful for their faith in the Lord Jesus and love for all the saints (1:15). [Royal decrees in antiquity; similarly, were often cast in the form of letters with their conventions of friendship, including the use of the phrase [‘I beseech you’], despite the lack of any personal relationship between the author of the decree and its recipients (e.g., 2 Macc. 9:19-27).]” [Thielman, 251]

PRAISE GOD FOR THOSE WHO LOVINGLY ENCOURAGE US SPIRITUALLY — *“Paul made no apology for pleading with people to do what he knew was right. I... entreat you, he says. Parakaleō (entreat) means to call to one’s side, with the idea of wanting to help or be helped. It connotes intense feeling, strong desire, In this context it is not simply a request but a plea, an imploring or begging. Paul was not giving suggestions to the Ephesians but divine standards, standards apart from which they could not live in a way that fittingly corresponded to their being children of God. Paul never exhorted on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. He could not rest until all those given into his spiritual care walked in a manner worthy of the calling with which they had been called.... Christians should not resent a pastor’s entreating them in the faith as Paul did those to whom he ministered. A pastor who approaches his ministry with detachment or indifference is not worthy of his office. Loving concern for the spiritual welfare of others is costly, and apart from God’s strength it is frustrating and demoralizing.”* Surveys of pastors over the past decade or so have revealed widespread discouragement and even depression — what one writer described as battle fatigue. A large percentage of those interviewed said that the most depressing part of their ministry was the sense of never being through, of always having more to do, and of seeing much of their ‘success’ turn out to be superficial and temporary. They

reported that there never seems to be enough time to prepare sermons as carefully as they should, to visit and counsel everyone who needs them, to attend all the meetings, or to accomplish the many other things expected of the pastor by his congregation and by himself. His work is never done, and the more he cares the more he sees to do. Paul, who himself did the work of a pastor and was an apostle and an evangelist, spoke of believers in Galatia as, ‘My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you’ (Gal. 4:19). He suffered perpetual birth pains from his great desire for the spiritual growth and maturity of those to whom he ministered. *Not only pastors but every believer should have a loving concern to ‘treat, implore, beg, and plead with others to respond in obedience to the gospel. Like Paul, they should have a passion to entreat their fellow believers to walk in a manner worthy of their calling — to be everything the Lord desires of them.’* [MacArthur, 118f]

‘Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.’ (Heb 13:17 NKJV)

Have you ever sat in a service and just have the Lord crawl all over you? When we were young Christians, the first thought might have been, ‘Pastor can’t talk to me that way!’ We blamed the messenger, not realizing it was the Holy Spirit working on our hearts. But that is what is supposed to happen when the Word of God is opened. Church services are not just times when we get together and chat about God. It is even not just instruction, although I thoroughly believe there should always be instruction when we meet. But the service is more than that - it is a time when the people of God meet and worship their God. And when the Word of God is proclaimed, it takes the Holy Spirit to take the Word and make application to our hearts, whether it be conviction or comfort.

I, the prisoner of the Lord — ἐγὼ ὁ δέσμιος ἐν κυρίῳ [egō ho desmios en kuriō] — *“Prisoners do not normally exercise authority; but Paul had authority within the church, because of his connection with the Lord, and he was suffering for his readers’ Lord; but [Paul] is not attempting to win their sympathy by recalling his imprisonment.”* [Best, 360] *“This not to excite their sympathy, or as desiring that they should cheer him in his troubles by their obedience; for, as Theodoret remarks, ‘he exults in his bonds for Christ’s sake more than a king in his diadem’; but rather to add force to his exhortation....* ‘In the Lord’ ... It assigns rather the special character which distinguished this captivity from others.” [Abbott, 104] *“Paul’s reference to himself as ‘the prisoner in the Lord’ recalls the similar self-description in 3:1, as well as the reference to his suffering for them in 3:13, and gives a certain gravitas to the instructions that follow. Paul so sincerely holds the convictions out of which this ethical advice flows that he is willing to suffer the physical pain and social stigma of imprisonment to be faithful to them.”* [Thielman, 252] *“There is nothing unworthy of the Christian calling in Paul’s being at present in custody, if that is where the Lord desires him to be; he is still the Lord’s ambassador, even if, for the time being, he is an ‘ambassador in chains’ (Eph. 6:20).”* [Bruce, 334] *“His imprisonment, which might have been supposed more likely to render him despised, is appealed to, as we have already seen, for a confirmation of his authority. It was the seal of that embassy with which he had been honored. Whatever belongs to Christ, though in the eyes of men it may be attended by ignominy, ought to be viewed by us with the highest regard. The apostle’s prison is more truly venerable than the splendid retinue or triumphal chariot of kings.”* [Calvin, 266f]

THE CHRISTIAN WALK MAY COST — *“By mentioning his imprisonment he gently reminds his readers that he knows the worthy Christian walk can be costly and that he has paid considerable cost himself because of his obedience to the Lord. He would not ask them to walk in a way in which he had not himself walked or pay a price that he himself was not willing to pay. His present physical circumstance seemed extremely negative from a human perspective, but Paul wanted his readers to know that this did not change his commitment to or his confidence in the Lord. The apostle was not seeking sympathy or using his Roman confinement as means for shaming the Ephesians into compliance with his request. He was reminding them again of his own complete subservience to Christ, his being the prisoner of the Lord whether he was in jail or not. He became the Lord’s prisoner on the road to Damascus and never sought to be free of that divine imprisonment.”* [MacArthur, 117f]

DO WE SEE ALL CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE LIGHT OF CHRIST? — *“Paul had the ability to see everything in the light of how it affected Christ, He saw everything vertically before he saw it horizontally. His motives were Christ’s, his standards were Christ’s, his objectives were Christ’s, his vision was Christ’s, his entire orientation was Christ’s. Everything he thought, planned, said and did was in relation to his Lord. He was in the fullest sense a captive of the Lord Jesus Christ. Most of us will admit that we tend to be so self-oriented that we see many things first of all — and sometimes only — in relation to ourselves. But the person who has the Word of Christ abiding in him richly, the one who saturates his mind with divine wisdom and truth will ask, ‘How does this affect God? How will reflect on Him? What does he want me to do with this problem or this blessing? How can I most please and honor Him in this?’ He tries to see everything through God’s divine grid. That attitude is the basis and the mark of spiritual maturity. With David, the mature Christian can say, ‘I have set the Lord continually before me: because He is at my right hand’ (Ps. 16:8).”* [MacArthur, 118]

to walk — περιπατῆσαι [peripatēsai] — *“[To ‘walk’ in most instances] has a literal sense in classical literature, the LXX, the Gospels, and Acts. In the rest of the NT, forty-seven out of forty-nine times and all eight times in Ephesians (2:2, 10; 4:1, 17 bis; 5:2, 8, 15), it is used metaphorically referring to conduct or lifestyle, whether negatively (e.g., Eph 2:2; 1 Cor 3:3; Col 3:7; 2 Thess 3:11) or positively (Eph 4:1; 5:2; Rom 6:4; Gal 5:16). Certainly, in this context, it refers to the lifestyle of the believer.”* [Hoehner, p504] *“He last used the term [‘walk’] in 2:1-10, to bracket his description of how God has brought his readers from an existence under the power of the world, the devil, and the flesh to an existence as God’s graciously restored creatures. Although they once ‘walked’ in transgressions and sins (2:2), they now must ‘walk’ in the good works God has intended for them from the first (2:10). In the second half of the letter, Paul will show in concrete terms how his readers’ new way of ‘walking’ should look (4:17; 5:2, 8, 15).”* [Thielman, 252]

A CHALLENGE TO US ALL — “The metaphor ‘walk’ suggests something controlled, enduring, and directed, not something frenetic or aimless. Short term effort is of no value; we need a lifetime of faithfulness mirroring God’s call. None of this suggests we accomplish anything by ourselves, but life with God and by his help is a life of discipline and effort. We want discipleship without discipline; it does not exist. We seek what we can get by with, but the challenge is to do what we should, to live worthy of the call. [Snodgrass, 217] *This will be discussed more later in this lesson but many believe we may be entirely passive in our Christian growth.*

GOOD PRACTICAL APPLICATION COMMENTS — To “walk worthy of that calling,” is to live as becomes a Christian, an heir of glory; to live as Christ did. It is,

- to bear our religion with us to all places, companies, employments. Not merely to be a Christian on the Sabbath, and at the communion-table, and in our own land; but every day, and everywhere, and in any land where we may be placed. We are to live religion, and not merely to profess it. We are to be Christians in the counting-room, as well as in the closet; on the farm, as well as at the communion-table; among strangers, and in a foreign land, as well as in our own country and in the sanctuary.
- It is to do nothing inconsistent with the most elevated Christian character. In temper, feeling, plan, we are to give expression to no emotion, and use no language, and perform no deed, that shall be inconsistent with the most elevated Christian character.
- It is to do *right always*: to be just to all; to tell the simple truth; to defraud no one; to maintain a correct standard of morals; to be known to be honest. There is a correct standard of character and conduct; and a Christian should be a man so living, that we may always know *exactly where to find him*. He should so live, that we shall have no doubts that, however others may act, we shall find him to be the unflinching advocate of temperance, chastity, honesty, and of every good work — of every plan that is really fitted to alleviate human woe, and benefit a dying world.
- It is to live as one should who expects soon to be *in heaven*. Such a man will feel that the earth not his home; that he is a stranger and a pilgrim here; that riches, honours, and pleasures are of comparatively little importance; that he ought to watch and pray, and that he ought to be holy. A man who feels that he may die at any moment will watch and pray. A man who realizes that *to-morrow* he may be in heaven will feel that he ought to be holy. He who begins a day on earth, feeling that at its close he may be among the angels of God, and the spirits of just men made perfect; that before its close he *may* have seen the Saviour glorified, and the burning throne of God, will feel the importance of living a holy life, and of being wholly devoted to the service of God. Pure should be the eyes that are soon to look on the throne of God; pure the hands that are soon to strike the harps of praise in heaven; pure the feet that are to walk the “golden streets above.” [Barnes’ NT Notes]

worthily — ἀξιῶς [axiōs] — “The adverb ‘worthy, worthily, suitably,’ literally means ‘bringing up the other beam of the scales,’ ‘bringing into equilibrium,’ and therefore ‘equivalent’ or ‘worthily, a manner worthy of, suitability.’ This word appears six times in the NT, and outside of 3 John 6 it is used only by Paul. In Phil 1:27 its connotation is that the believer’s life should be worthy of the gospel of Christ and in Col 1:10 its connotation is that the believer is to live a life worthy of the Lord (cf. Rom 16:2; 1 Thess 2:12). In the present context the emphasis is on conduct that is in balance with or equal to one’s ‘call.’” [Hoehner, p504] “Axios (worthy) has the root meaning of balancing the scales — what is on one side of the scale should be equal in weight to what is on the other side. By extension, the word came to be applied to anything that was expected to correspond to something else. A person worthy of his pay was one whose day’s work corresponded to his day’s wages. The believer who walks in a manner worthy of the calling with which he has been called is one whose daily living corresponds his high position as a child of God and fellow heir with Jesus Christ. His practical living matches his spiritual position.” [MacArthur, 119]

THE TWO GREAT COMMANDMENTS — “In the Pauline corpus [‘worthily’] is variously linked to God (1 Th 2.12; cf 3 Jn 6), Christ (Col 1.10, where it is also combined with [‘walk’]), the gospel (Phil 1.27), the saints (Rom 16.2). The closest parallel to 4.1 is probably 1 Th 2.12 where [‘call’] is also used. Believers have not been called because they have lived worthily, but now that they have been called, worthy living should be their appropriate response. To live worthily is not just to live morally; there are two great commandments and worthy living relates as much to the first as to the second.” [Best, 361]

NOT A SET OF RULES — “An admonition of this kind is more far-reaching than a list of detailed rules; it affects areas of life for which it might be difficult to frame rules. As members of a reputable family will have the family’s good name in mind as they order their public conduct, so members of the Christian society will have in mind not only the society’s reputation in the world but the character of him who called it into being and the purpose for which he so called it.” [Bruce, 334]

of the calling with which ye were called — τῆς κλήσεως ἧς ἐκλήθητε, [tēs klēseōs hēs eklēthēte] — **OUR DIVINE CALL TO SALVATION** — “[Paul] uses here both the verb [‘kaleo’] and its cognate noun as in 1.6, 19, 20, 2.4; [‘parakaleo’] is also a compound from the same root; all this helps emphasize the fact of their calling by God who is the unspoken subject (cf 1 Th 2.12; Gal 1.6; 1 Cor 1.9; Rom 11.29). The Gentile readers are only where they are as believers and members of the people of God because God has acted. Their calling is not to a special position or function within the church (Rom 1.1; 1 Cor 1.1) but to being Christians (Rom 8.28, 30; 9.11, 24; 1 Cor 1.9; 1 Th 4.7; Eph 1.18) and is closely related to their election.” [Best, 361] “The notion of this call (cf. also 1:18) is similar to that found in [other Pauline epistles] where it can be used, for example, for God’s activity in making believers’ predestination effective (cf. Rom 8:30) and in bringing them into the fellowship of his Son

(1 Cor 1:9). Here the passive form of the verb is a ‘divine passive,’ underlining what is already inherent in the idea of the call: God’s initiative in bringing humanity to the goal for which he intended it. The past tense looks back particularly to the readers’ reception of the gospel and of the Spirit, referred to in 1:13. The use of the language of calling in the context of his ethical appeal indicates that for [Paul] God’s sovereign initiative and human responsibility for living appropriately go hand in hand, so that he would not for one moment have expected his earlier stress on predestination and election (1:3, 4), and even on God’s preparation of believers’ good works ahead of time (2:10), to undermine the seriousness with which his exhortation was to be taken. The appeal to live worthily of God’s calling presupposes that God’s gracious initiative requires a continuous human response and that his call bestows both high privilege and high responsibility. [Lincoln, 235] “We see the calling first in chapter 1 where we have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in that the Father selected us, the Son redeemed us, and the Spirit sealed us (1:3-14). Because of these blessings Paul prays that the believers might know God and thus know the hope of their calling, God’s inheritance in the saints, and God’s power toward or in the believers (1:15-23). This calling is further seen in the salvation of the unregenerate by God’s grace and their placement in the heavenlies in Christ (2:1-10). This calling proceeds from the individual to the union of the Jews and Gentiles into one body, called the church (2:11-3:13). Because of this call of Jews and Gentiles into one body, Paul prays for Christ’s strengthening love in order that the union would not only be true theologically but also experientially among the believers (3:14-21). Because of this calling to individual salvation and to a corporate body of believers, Paul draws the inference that we should walk worthy of that calling (4:1).... *The noun ‘call’ appears three times in Ephesians (1:18; 4:1, 4). In the study of the word in 1:18, we concluded that it normally refers to a religious ‘call’ or an ‘invitation, summons’ by God (Rom 11:29; Eph 1:18; 4:4; 2 Thess 1:11; Heb 3:1). It is often linked with election (1 Cor 1:26; 2 Pet 1:10; 2 Tim 1:9) because in the verb form it is used of those whom God foreknew and predestined, thus called and justified (Rom 8:29-30). In the present context, the reference is not only to salvation by election and adoption by the Father (cf. 1:4-5), but also to their union into one body, the church. Therefore, the call to walk worthy of the calling refers not only to the individual believers but also the corporate body of believers.*” [Hoehner, 502, 504f] “*In the Pauline corpus, God’s call comes to people entirely at God’s initiative (Rom. 4:17; 8:30) and as a free gift (Gal. 1:6, 15), unrelated to any prior merit in those whom he calls, no matter their socioeconomic status (1 Cor. 1:26), their ethnicity (Rom. 9:24-26), or their actions (Rom. 9:12; 2 Tim. 1:9).* This call certainly has immediate, present ramifications — it immediately places those who receive it in fellowship with God’s Son, Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:9) — but, as the other two references to it in Ephesians emphasize (1:18, 4:4), it is oriented primarily toward the believer’s future ‘hope.’ It is a call to have a share in the future establishment of God’s kingdom at the time of Jesus’s coming (1 Thess. 2:12; 5:23-24; 2 Thess. 2:14; Eph. 1:18; 4:4; cf. Phil. 3:14; 1 Tim. 6:12). In 1 Thessalonians, Paul’s understanding of the call of God implies that between the time of conversion, when the call first comes, and the time of Jesus’s parousia, when it is fulfilled, believers should ‘walk ... worthily of the God who has called’ them (1 Thess. 2:12; 5:2.3-24). Here in Eph. 4:1, Paul has the same idea in mind. God has called Paul’s readers to be part of his people not because of anything they have done (cf. 2:8-9) or because of the social group to which they belong (cf. 2:11-13), but as a free gift. They now need to live in a way that is consistent with this past, free call of God and in light of the ‘hope’ to which they have been called (1:18; 4:4; cf. 2 Thess. 1:11; Gal. 5:13; 1 Cor. 7:15; Col. 3:15; 2 Tim. 1:9).” [Thielman, 252] “The calling with which you have been called is the sovereign, saving calling of God (cf. 1 Thess. 2:12). ‘No one can come to Me,’ Jesus said, ‘unless the Father who sent Me draws him’ (John 6:44; cf. v. 65). On another occasion, He said, ‘And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself’ (John 12:32). Paul tells us that those whom God ‘predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified’ (Rom. 8:30). As the apostle mentioned in the opening of this letter, ‘He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him’ (Eph. 1:4). No person can be saved apart from receiving Jesus Christ as is Savior. But no person can choose Christ who has not already been chosen by the Father and the Son. ‘You did not choose Me,’ Jesus explained to the disciples, ‘but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit could remain’ (John 15:16). Paul makes many references to the believer’s calling, which, as in its case, refers to the Lord’s sovereign, effectual call to salvation (Rom. 11:29; 1 Cor. 1:26; Eph. 1:18; 4:1, 4; Phil. 3:14; 2 Thess. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:9; cf. Heb. 3:1; 2 Pet. 1:10). *Without God’s calling, without His choosing us, our choosing Him would be futile. In fact, if God did not call men to Himself no man would want to come to Him, because the natural man — every natural man — is at enmity with God (Rom. 8:7). The marvelous truth of the gospel is that God not only sent His Son to provide the way of salvation (Rom. 5:8) but that He sent Him to seek the lost in order to save them (Luke 19:10). God was not content simply to make salvation available. He has called the redeemed elect to Himself.* That is why our calling is a high calling, a ‘heavenly calling’ (Heb. 3:1), and ‘a holy calling’ (2 Tim. 1:9). And that is why the faithful, responsive Christian is determined to ‘press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus’ (Phil. 3:14).” [MacArthur, 119]

THIS CALLING IS TO ALL BELIEVERS — “*If God’s love is so great, if his salvation is so powerful, if God has granted such reconciliation, then believers should live accordingly. They should value God’s love enough to be shaped by it. Note that ‘calling’ is used of the salvation and responsibility of every Christian, not of the ‘professional ministry’ or an elite group. This one call is for all Christians to live in accord with what God has done.*” [Snodgrass, 196]

AS DEFINED IN THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM — “*The sense of the word, and the agency employed in calling us, are well expressed in the Westminster Shorter Catechism: ‘Effectual calling is the work of God’s Spirit, whereby convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the gospel.’ This calling or vocation is through the agency of the Holy Spirit, and is his appropriate work on the human heart. It consists essentially in influencing the mind to turn to God, or to enter into his kingdom. It is the exertion of so much influence on the mind as is necessary to secure the turning of the sinner to God.*” [Barnes’ NT Notes]

‘MONERGISTIC VS. SYNERGISTIC’ — There are two words involving our salvation, one is ‘monergistic’ (made up of the words ‘mono’ + ‘ergo’ meaning ‘work’ and is where we get our word ‘energy’) and the other is ‘synergistic’ (syn, ‘together with’ + ‘ergo’). Monergistic speaks of our salvation and is ‘the doctrine that the Holy Ghost acts independently of the human will in the work of regeneration.’ Synergistic is used in describing our sanctification and is ‘the doctrine that the human will cooperates with the Holy Ghost.’ ***To confuse these two terms is to fall into error!*** ***“To this point in the letter the readers have been asked to do nothing except remember their past alienation and present acceptance in Christ (2:1 1). For three chapters they have been reminded of God’s goodness and the marvelous salvation that is theirs. Now with all the force possible, readers are implored to live worthy of their calling. Application requires accepting the challenge to live out our faith. So often Christianity is presented as if nothing is required of believers. We place so much emphasis on human weakness, on our inability to do anything profitable, and on the necessity of God’s actions in salvation that no room is left for human responsibility. The New Testament never gives this impression! Human responsibility is wedded to God’s action, but we are responsible. We must expect something of ourselves. If God’s salvation is so good, live like it. This requires an act of the will and a determination to follow through.... Our problem is that we have a million dollar salvation and a five-cent response. We seem unimpressed with God’s salvation. We protest that no one can actually live worthy of this calling and express our fears of perfectionism. The text is anxious about neither; its concern is only that our lives are shaped by God’s salvation. Right theology should lead to right conduct. Why is the process so frequently aborted? Is it because theology is threaded through the brain but never gets to the heart? Such belief is useless. Is our knowledge only a source of pride? Our understanding of our call must be sincere and honest, going to the depths of our being. Then by a determined act of our wills and by the help of God’s Spirit, our lives must be drawn into line with this call. We are called to receive and show grace.”*** [Snodgrass, 217f]

Ephesians 4:1 —

I therefore which am in bondes for the lordes sake exhorte you that ye walke worthy of the vocacion wherwith ye are called (Tyndale’s New Testament, 1524)

I therefore, being prisoner in the Lord, praie you that yee walke worthie of the vocation whereunto yee are called, (Geneva Bible, 1599)

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, (King James Version, 1769)

Call upon you, then, do I — the prisoner of the Lord — to walk worthily of the calling with which ye were called, (Young’s Literal Translation, 1898)

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, (Revised Version, 1885)

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, (American Standard Version, 1901)

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, (Revised Standard Version, 1952)

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, (New King James Version, 1982)

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, (New American Standard Version, 1995)

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. (New International Version, 2011)

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, (English Standard Version, 2011)

Παρακαλῶ οὖν ὑμᾶς ἐγὼ ὁ δέσμιος ἐν κυρίῳ ἀξίως περιπατῆσαι τῆς κλήσεως ἧς ἐκλήθητε (Stephanus Greek NT, 1550)

Παρακαλῶ οὖν ὑμᾶς ἐγὼ ὁ δέσμιος ἐν κυρίῳ ἀξίως περιπατῆσαι τῆς κλήσεως ἧς ἐκλήθητε, (NA28 Greek New Testament)