

“Christian Virtues”  
Ephesians 4:1-3  
(Preached at Trinity, November 2, 2014)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As I pointed out last time, while the first half of Ephesians is largely doctrinal in nature the final chapters are of a more practical nature. Paul passes from what we must *believe* to what we must *do*. Doctrine defines how we live.
  2. **Verse 1** is one of the key verses of the entire book. Paul has spent three chapters talking about our God's amazing work of redemption. Now Paul admonishes us to walk worthy of our calling. We must progress in the faith. Paul says, "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called"
  3. The remainder of the book is really just an expansion of this verse as Paul reminds us of how to walk worthy of our calling.  
Paul's primary emphasis for the remainder of this book will focus on the importance of relationships and of the unity of believers.
  4. As we come to **Verse 2** Paul expounds on how we walk worthy of our calling by setting forth several Christian virtues. These are virtues that involve our interaction with others. They are really the essence of our Christian character and they are essential in order for us to maintain Christian unity.  
**Ephesians 4:2 NAU** - "with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love"  
**Ephesians 4:3 NAU** - "being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."
  5. This morning I'd like us to consider these carefully. They seem so basic and yet they are profound. We too easily dismiss these traits in our lives. Paul begins the remainder of the book of Ephesians by reminding us that these four traits that are basic to Christianity: Humility, Gentleness, Patience, and Tolerance or forbearance  
All four of these must be permeated and ruled by love. Christianity is about a life fueled by a love for Christ. Such love changes everything. It controls how we interact with others. Walking worthy of our calling is to walk in a manner that harmonizes with our calling.
- I. Humility
    - A. Humility is one of the most difficult of the Christian virtues
      1. Our great problem is that we love ourselves above all else
      2. Self love crowds out all other love
      3. It focuses upon our needs, our desires, our ambitions

4. We think our lives are most important, our ideas, our possessions  
Self love causes self pride – "look at me, look at what I have"  
"I'm great, I'm wonderful"  
It sounds so ugly when put this way.
  5. Pride makes it difficult to be submissive—chiefly to God but all to others.  
**Ephesians 5:21 NAU** - "be subject to one another in the fear of Christ."
- B. To walk worthy of our calling is to remember the wonder and glory of our redemption – it is most humbling
1. God has saved us from a cesspool of sin
  2. Paul referred to himself as the chief of sinners. He was humbled before Christ.  
**Galatians 6:14 KJV** - "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."
  3. The person who experiences the goodness of God in salvation is humbled
  4. It is the heart transformed through the grace of regeneration.  
**Micah 6:8 NAU** - "He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?"
  5. We have the perfect model in Christ - The King of kings came to earth as a servant. The perfect, spotless Son of God allowed Himself to be taken by the polluted hands of sinful men and crucified.
- C. The ultimate cure for pride is love – a love for Christ, a love for our fellow man.
1. If you do not love Christ you have not been converted.  
**1 Corinthians 16:22 NAU** - "If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed."
    - a. If you love Christ you have died to self  
**Luke 9:23-24 NAU** - "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. <sup>24</sup> "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it."
    - b. Thomas Watson – “So a humble saint takes the crown of honour from his own head and sets it upon Christ’s. And the reason is the love that he bears to Christ. Love can part with anything to the object loved. The humble saint loves Christ entirely, therefore can part with anything to him. He gives away to Christ the honour and praise of all he does.”
    - c. Pride says, “Look at me.” This is the heart of the natural man. To seek to gain recognition for ourselves it to rob Christ of His glory. Love will never permit us to do that.
  2. Love also brings us to humble ourselves before our fellow man
    - a. Love will not allow us to walk over him or treat him with contempt and scorn.
    - b. Love will cause us to raise our esteem of him. It will cause us to see his value. This will result in silencing our boastful tongue and casting water upon the fires of our arrogance.

- c. To be destitute of this humility is to be destitute of love. To be destitute of love is to be destitute of all Christian graces.  
**1 Corinthians 13:4-5 NAU** - " love does not brag *and* is not arrogant, <sup>5</sup> does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own"

## II. Gentleness

- A. This is another one of the Christian virtues
1. It is from the Greek word πραΰτης. It is the same word used in the list Paul refers to as the “fruit of the Spirit” in **Galatians 5**
  2. It is a word that speaks of being considerate and courteous. I like to speak of it as being gracious.
  3. The demeanor of this world is to be harsh, rude, always demanding our rights. Our demeanor must be that of gentleness and meekness (which is how the KJV always translates this word.)
  4. This is the opposite of a censorious spirit. It is to refrain from anger even when we may feel justified. One commentator described it as “strength under control”
- B. This is a Christian grace that creates a meek and quiet spirit
1. Gentleness extols quietness. It demonstrates the grace of humility  
 Peter uses it to describe an excellent wife  
**1 Peter 3:4 NAU** - "but *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God."
  2. James uses this word to describe how we become teachable  
**James 1:21 NAU** - "Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls."
  3. Peter uses it to describe our demeanor as we share the Gospel and defend the faith. We should guard against appearing argumentative.  
**1 Peter 3:15 NAS** - " but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence"  
**2 Timothy 2:24-25 NAU** - "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, <sup>25</sup> with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth,"
  4. Again, our greatest model is Christ—His life was characterized by this gentle spirit.  
**Matthew 11:28 NAS** - "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls."  
**2 Corinthians 10:1 NAU** - "Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ"

5. All of this takes much grace. It should be our continued prayer—  
Oh God, help me to be gentle and gracious as I interact with others

### III. Patience

- A. Patience towards God is the grace of being able to wait
  1. The young person prepares himself or herself to be an excellent mate and then waits upon God.
  2. We prepare for a vocation and then wait upon God
  3. In times of sickness or distress we patiently wait upon God.
  4. Prayer demands a willingness to patiently wait upon God  
**Luke 18:1 NAU** - "Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart"
  5. God teaches us patience by His Spirit. Few things come instantly. Sanctification is a life-long process.
- B. But Paul's use of the word here implies our dealings with others
  1. The KJV often translates this word, longsuffering. It means to be considerate of others even while under provocation.
  2. Longsuffering implies patience towards others when they don't quite meet our expectations. We are willing to suffer long with them.  
Calvin: Patience is the mind that brings us "to take everything in good part and not to be easily offended."
  3. Patience is a heart that understands that God is not yet through with our brother, or with us. We are a work in progress.
  4. Love finds its greatest expression towards those who are least attractive to us, to those unworthy. Jesus said, "Love your enemies."
  5. We should reflect upon God's patience towards us. He is wonderfully patient with us. The Holy Spirit creates in us this heart of patience.

### IV. Tolerance and forbearance ruled by love.

- A. This word implies the acceptance of others
  1. It speaks of bearing with others even when we disagree. It speaks of bearing with others even when they treat you unkindly. It speaks of bearing long with others without turning your heart against them.
  2. It demands great patience
- B. This word is often misunderstood. Tolerance does not mean accepting all beliefs as being of equal value
  1. Christianity is very narrow—there is one single way of salvation. Christ is the truth. Scripture is absolute truth.
  2. We live in an age of relativism, of pragmatism. We live in an age where few believe in absolutes.
  3. Because we hold to absolutes Christians are sometimes accused of intolerance. It is true that there are many non-negotiables—there are absolutes. There is unchanging truth.
  4. There is a great difference between the absolute truth of Scripture and the mere opinions of men.
  5. We may feel very strongly about some of our opinions. Personal opinions do not hold the absolute authority of God's Word.

6. We must guard against a heart that is always critical of others – of being censorious.
  - a. The critical heart continually judges the actions of others, often without any evidence of wrongdoing. “They just bought a new car. They must be guilty of covetousness.”
  - b. Such a person is constantly censoring the actions of others. They judge how others live, down to the last detail
  - c. It’s one thing to place a high value on holiness. It’s another to have a Pharisaical, self-righteous heart that continually condemns the actions of others—even as we excuse ourselves.
  - d. We must carefully guard against a harsh intolerant heart.
7. We must give others the benefit of the doubt. This is the measure of love. **1 Corinthians 13:7 NAU** - "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."
8. Love will lead us to bear with one others, even when their fleshly weakness is showing, even when their ways are not exactly your ways.
9. Love must permeate all that we do. Notice **Verse 15** - "speaking the truth in love"

#### Conclusion:

1. Christianity demands humbling ourselves before one another. It demands being willing to have others advance before us.
2. Paul condemned the Corinthian Christians for taking one another to court. Would it not be better to suffer the wrong?  
**1 Corinthians 6:6-7 NAU** - "brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers? <sup>7</sup> Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?"
3. To live together in unity is a sweet savor in the sight of God.  
**Psalms 133:1-3 NAU** - "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell together in unity! <sup>2</sup> It is like the precious oil upon the head, Coming down upon the beard, *Even* Aaron's beard, Coming down upon the edge of his robes. <sup>3</sup> It is like the dew of Hermon Coming down upon the mountains of Zion; For there the LORD commanded the blessing-- life forever."
4. As Christians united with the body of Christ and indwelt by the Holy Spirit we have been given a wonderful unity. Paul is telling us to give great attention to preserving this unity.  
**Ephesians 4:2 NAU** - "with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love,"