

The Way to Walk

By Joel Wood

Bible Text: Ephesians 4:17-24

Preached On: Sunday, August 5, 2018

Trinity Reformed Presbyterian Church

4515 Sandy Spring Road

Burtonsville, MD 20866

Website: www.trinityrpc.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/trinityrpc

We are in Ephesians 4 again, today. I'm going to read verses 1 through 24 as we are just barely dipping into this next section which starts in verse 17, we're really reviewing today and making application. And so I want to be clear that 17 to 24 is not the totality of the text from which the points will be drawn, that we will be reviewing some once we reflect on the opening portion of verse 17 and following. Ephesians chapter 4, listen to God's word: "[\[Ephesians 4:1-19\]](#) I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, exhort you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you were called. With all humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another in love, be eager to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, even as you were 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 grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men." (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also He who ascended far above all the heavens that He might fill all things.) He gave some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, for the equipping of the saints, for the work of service, and for the building up of the body of Christ, until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, into a complete man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so we may no longer be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men, by craftiness with deceitful scheming. But, speaking the truth in love, we may grow up in all things into Him, who is the head, Christ Himself, from whom the whole body is joined together and connected by every joint and ligament, as every part effectively does its work and grows, building itself up in love. Therefore this I say and testify in the Lord, that from now on you walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds, having their understanding darkened, excluded from the life of God through the ignorance that is within them, due to the hardness of their hearts. Being calloused they have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness." The grass withers and the flower fades but the word of our God stands forever.

Today we will be baptizing yet another little one into the church, into the covenant of grace. His little feet will start out on the way of Christ. There is a way to walk that we desire our children to walk. Verse 17 begins with the word "therefore" and that is a word of logical development for Paul. He's building the next part of his argument on the previous part of his argument. Paul is moving on to say that the Ephesians should live, should-- what is literally said here: walk-- differently than other gentiles around them. And at its heart, this section echoes the first part of the chapter. "[\[Ephesians 4:1-3\]](#) I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, exhort you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you were called. With all humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another in love, be eager

to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." There, he (Paul) was calling the Ephesians to a particular way of life rooted in their calling. Now, starting in verse 17, he's calling them to a particular walk which sets them apart from the rest of their culture. So that they "*walk not as other gentiles walk.*"

In scripture the idea of one's walk, of walking with God, is inclusive of the outer public actions and the inner secret thoughts and habits. In fact, as Paul goes on in chapter 4, that's exactly what he's talking about: the habits that we have in this life. This idea of walk denotes the entirety of the "what we do, how we do it, and why we do it." All of that needs to be sanctified. Between these bookends of chapter 4 verse 1 and the verses that follow and chapter 4 verse 17 and the verses that follow, Paul gives the "how" for the "what" that will come in verses 20 and following. Yes, the "put off, put on" work that must be done in the Christian life. In verses 17 through 19, Paul gives a summary which we will look at in greater detail in weeks to come. That unconverted gentiles walk, and remember that means live, in the vanity of their minds. They live having their understanding darkened. They live excluded from the life of God through the ignorance that is within them, due to the hardness of their hearts. He goes on to say that they're callused, they're overly sensual, they're impure, and they're greedy.

Today, we will get to hold little Colin Blair McKelvy in our arms, baptizing him and vowing to him as Mommy and Daddy and as covenant community that this is exactly how we do not want him to live. No, we want verses 1 through 3, not verses 17 through 19 of Ephesians 4. So at such a young age and small stature we will ask a lot of him. We will ask him to put off the deeds of the flesh, the sinful deeds of the flesh, and put on Christ and that's a tall order. How do we expect him to do that? Well we will remind him of the very basis for that Paul has already given us in this section between chapter 4 verse 3 and chapter 4 verse 17.

Which brings me to my point for today. We will remind Colin of the unity of the faith in Christ, the person and work of Christ, the church of Christ, the maturing body of Christ. As Paul has reminded the Ephesians, we will seek to remind Colin of these things. Now if there should be a question, I don't look at this text and see Colin in the text, but what I do see is a grand opportunity to apply this text in this moment. To go back and review and to remind ourselves of just how Paul can go on and say "[\[Ephesians 4:17\]](#) *Therefore this I say and testify in the Lord, that from now on you walk not as other Gentiles walk,*" Paul had laid the foundation. Paul had given all the reasons why this was possible, we want to remind ourselves of that today as we baptize yet another covenant child.

One, unity of the faith in Christ. Paul says in verses 4 through 6 that: "[\[Ephesians 4:4-6\]](#) *There is one body and one Spirit, even as you were 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.*" As we consider our calling, brothers and sisters, there is only one body, one group, into which we can be called. The church, the ecclesia, the called out ones. That can only be one, there cannot be multiples. There is one calling into one church. And this is exhibited by one Lord! There is only one whom we can love, serve, obey, and be called to and be called by. There is only one Lord. This is exhibited by one faith. There is only one belief that is true, that is right, that is saving. God has not called sinners to himself into whatever group they want to formulate. No, he has called them to Himself, into the church, where there is one Lord, there is one faith.

This is also exhibited by one baptism. Now, there are false baptisms, the Mormons have got one, Jehovah's Witnesses have got one, other cults have some, but there is only one true sacrament of initiation into the covenant of grace. And that is by the waters of Christian baptism. In Colossians 2 we read: "[\[Colossians 2: 11-12\]](#) *In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in*

baptism, in which also you were raised with Him through the faith of the power of God, who has raised Him from the dead." The New Testament sacrament of baptism is linked inextricably to the Old Testament sacrament of circumcision. In our baptism we were circumcised. That is the case for all converts who are to be baptized and for their children who should also be baptized.

It is exhibited by one Lord, one faith, one baptism. It is exhibited also by one God and Father of all. There is only one Creator. There are many myths, there are many stories, there are many theories, but at the end of the day there is only one Creator. He did it the way scripture tells us in Genesis and He is the ground and being of all things, especially the gospel in the church. The unity of the faith in Christ.

Secondly, number two, the person and work of Christ. "[\[Ephesians 4:7-10\]](#) *But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men." (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also He who ascended far above all the heavens that He might fill all things.)*" Here, Paul begins to touch on the gifts Christ has given the church, but he emphasizes clearly the basis for these gifts which is His accomplished work, who He is, and what He has done. All that He did in His descension and ascension, His humiliation and His exultation which He did as our Redeemer in his offices of prophet, preacher, and king. Who He is and what He has done are vital for each one of us as we consider who we are and what we are to do. We are sinners. As we consider today our children, they are sinners. It's who they are and it's what they do. It's who we are and it's what we do.

If little Colin is to walk as he should and live as he should he is to put off the sinful deeds of the flesh and put on Christ, but he must understand that he can't do it in his own power and of his own will. "[\[John 1:12\]](#) *Yet to all who received Him, He gave the power to become sons of God, to those who believed in His name,*" and if you grew up in a Christian context as I did, you memorized John 1:12. You got that down, but we always forgot John 1:13. "[\[John 1:13\]](#) *who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*" Brothers and sisters, as we raise our children let us not separate their behavior from the person and work of Jesus Christ or we will raise a bunch of dead hearted little Pharisees who know exactly how to sit and act and talk and respond and hate their parents and hate Jesus in the process.

Thirdly, the church of Christ. "[\[Ephesians 4:11-14\]](#) *He gave some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, for the equipping of the saints, for the work of service, and for the building up of the body of Christ, until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, into a complete man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so we may no longer be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men, by craftiness with deceitful scheming.*" Here, Paul presents to us the offices that Christ has established in the church and the church is the incubator where all of these things ruminate and grow and take root. The church is the body into which we are placed. The church is the garden in which we are planted. The church is the flock into which we are set. The church is the family into which we are born. And Christ established and ordained the church with her particular officers in particular times and places, not to simply have a power construct so that we know who's calling the shots, not simply for the sake of organization so that we can have a club with jackets. But Christ gave us the church as He gave it with a goal in mind, so that we may each grow to maturity, embracing truth, rejecting and no longer even being harassed by error. There is a goal in mind for each part of Christ's church. And we trust the word of God and so we believe that the reason Christ gave us the church in its Presbyterian form is for our good and His glory.

We don't have the right to play at church, we don't have the right to tinker with it. The principal principles of Presbyterianism are from God's word. God has placed us in His church for an end that can only be reached by practicing those principles. And the strength and stability and maturity that come about for each one from that are for our good. We, through the ordained officers of the church, are equipped so that we might serve Christ in all our places and stations, so that the body of Christ is built up.

Number four, the maturing body of Christ. "[\[Ephesians 4:15-16\]](#) *But, speaking the truth in love, we may grow up in all things into Him, who is the head, Christ Himself, from whom the whole body is joined together and connected by every joint and ligament, as every part effectively does its work and grows, building itself up in love.*" Speaking the truth in love, there are two parts here. First is the speaking of the truth. This must happen from the pulpit, this must happen in our homes, this must happen in the hallway, in the fellowship hall. We are people who are set apart unto, marked out by, and must be about the truth. It must be in our hearts, but also on our lips. We must learn it, we must grow in it, we must converse in it. Sure, not every discussion has to be a significant doctrinal debate, but we can't always avoid it or we won't grow in it. That is why we must speak the truth in love.

We must have love, one for another, in our hearts or we will avoid speaking the truth. We must love one another. This is what we desire for our children, this is what we desire for little Colin, to grow up in an environment where he hears the truth, he is confronted by the truth, he's nourished by the truth, and he's done so by people who he knows love him and care for him and desire all the best for him. So let us strive to speak the truth, to be about the doctrines of grace, the principles of our faith, the confession and catechisms as faithful summaries of scriptural teaching. Let us be all about it and let us be all about it all in love and love for one another. We know that love as marked out by 1 Corinthians 13 will not always be comfortable. So let's strive after this love, even when it is uncomfortable and difficult. Our times are short and precious that we have together, the time that we have to discuss together our walk with the Lord, our growth in the faith, our encouragement for one another in the truth so don't be absent. And the times to study together, to pray together, to worship together, don't be absent unless you absolutely have to be. Be here, be engaged, be present, be speaking the truth in love. Now, this will build as earthly as possible an ideal environment in which to raise all of our little babies, in which we will place little Colin today.

Our desire for him is to learn to love God's truth as much as he loves God's people and also to love God's people as much as he loves God's truth and loves to have the word applied to his own heart as much as he does seeing it applied to the hearts of those around him. Who sees the body growing up together as a beautiful nourishing place to be, as each part fits together growing up in Him, as each part learns to communicate in the way of rightly ordered affections for God and for each other. The whole body, every joint and ligament, every part.

In closing, brothers and sisters, as we pray for and look for sanctification (that putting off and that putting on) as we pray for and look for that in our children, let us be faithful to remind them of Christ: all He has done, all that He is, all that He has given, to save and sanctify them. Let us point them faithfully to the unity of the faith in Christ, the person and work of Christ, the church of Christ, and the maturing body Christ of which they live and breathe as a part of it. And that they might grow up in every way, that they might at young ages be confronted by their sin and know the greatness of their Savior, as they have heard Him spoken of and as they have felt the love of those around them conveying that truth to them. As we pray and look for sanctification in our children, let us be faithful to remind them of Christ, all He has done and all He has given to save and sanctify them.

Stand with me as we pray.