

Ephesians 1:20,

... that He worked in Christ when He raised him from the dead and seated Him at the right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. And He put all things under His feet and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is the body, the fullness of Him who fills all of it.

So, the first truth is that Jesus is seated in the heavenlies, which means he is an authority, which means for those of you who are feeling like life is chaotic and out of control, the assurance in Christ being seated is: He is on the throne and is still in control, no matter what is happening today. It's a great truth.

Ephesians 2:4,

... but God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved - and raised up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Today, we're going to explore the word **walk**. Because we have been seated and rest in Him in His finished work, we can now walk.

Ephesians 4:1,

I therefore, a prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.

Therefore. Remember, we've done this **therefore** at the beginning of chapter four. You asked the question, why is it **therefore**? It's **therefore**, as a result of all the Christ has done in chapter one and two and three; **therefore**, because of that finished work, we can now walk. That's where he's going.

Ephesians 5:1,

Therefore, be imitators of God as beloved children.

You are beloved. I am beloved by God. I'm His beloved; there's intimacy there. Verse two,

... and walk in love as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Paul opened his letter with, *to the saints who are an Ephesus*. Verse one. But in verse six, we are *placed in the heavenlies*. So, what scripture declares is when you put your faith in Jesus Christ, He takes you out of your earthly city and places you in a heavenly city. He takes you out of this realm and He puts you in that realm, and you are seated next to Christ because of His finished work of salvation. And having been seated in the heavenlies, we are now called on to come back to Ephesus. We go from Ephesus to the heavenlies and back to Ephesus, which is where you and I live. And Paul's concern through this whole book is that because Ephesus was such a culture of decadence and sinfulness and darkness, he wanted us to know that we were seated in the heavenlies, and when we live out our lives on earth, it is not an easy thing to do.

Jesus paints a masterpiece, as big as that wall over there. And He paints a picture of salvation. It's a beautiful tapestry, a canvas picture. It captures what salvation is. And on the bottom of this beautiful painting of salvation is the word **finished**. Jesus finished the art piece. He finished our salvation. You and I are nothing more than curators in the art museum. That's what I want you to hear.

As a curator, we invite people to the art museum. We do an exhibit of the work that Christ has done, but as a curator, your job is **not** to paint over the painting that Jesus has done: your job as a curator is not to get a brush and some paint and finish up what Jesus didn't do: we are to walk a life that causes people to want to come to the art museum to see Jesus's finished work of salvation. And so, we sit and we adore. If we were to walk past this painting, this finished work of Christ regarding our salvation, and the curator or the museum hosts was to describe the painting, let me tell you how he would describe it:

Verse three, blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love, He predestined us for adoptions as son and daughters through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the beloved.

You are adored by God. He loves you more than your mother loves you. *We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of His will, according to the purpose which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth.*

In Him, we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, so that we who are the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

Are you sitting? Do you appreciate His finished work and all that He did for you? Now, having been seated, we are now called on to do something because of what He has done for us. And that's where we're going to explore today.

This word **walk**. *I therefore, a prisoner of the Lord urge you to walk*. The word walk simply means to conduct, to behave, to live accordingly, that word walk in the Old Testament, when you read the word walk, it's literally a figurative walking around. It's always in terms of the figurative. Somebody walked from this city to that city, with somebody who walked from this land to that land. Somebody walked from this house to that house. It's just literally walking. In the gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John - walked means to walk from one place to another. Jesus walked from Galilee to Jerusalem, but in the epistles, Paul takes the phrase and now refers to it in a metaphor. He begins to say, you people know how you walk. They didn't have cars. They got around walking; it was their mode of transportation. It's how they got from one place to another. And so Paul comes along and says, you know how you live your life from one place to another? You know how you conduct yourself as you go from one place to another? Do you know how you make choices along the way? That's what he means here. It's in the present tense. It's an ongoing thing: how you're living right now. It's how you live your life. It's how you conduct yourself. It's how you live in all of your relationships. It's what you do.

Now here's what I want you to hear: the Christian life is not instantaneous. We, when we put our faith in Jesus, begin a journey with Him. We begin to a quest with Him. We are invited to do something with Him, but I want you to hear that the Christian life and becoming all that Jesus wants us to be, is not immediate. And it's not instant. It is a process by which, as I walk with Him, I become more like Him. He invites me on a journey that will span my whole lifetime. And there is not one person in this world who has arrived. We're all on the same journey of walking with Him. Now, let me say this real clearly to some of you, some of you in your faith journey came forward. You came forward in a church service. I came forward in a Billy Graham crusade. Some of you have come to the altar of a church. Some of you have gotten down on your knees and accepted Jesus. You came forward at a revival, but this word **walk** is not about coming forward. It's about **moving** forward. Some of you came forward, but you have yet to move forward. You're still stuck at the altar. You still haven't done anything. In fact, some of

you have been Christians so long - 40 years, 50 years - that somewhere in that coming forward to today, not much has happened. You move from the alter to the bleachers and you became critics and judges of people trying to live out their Christian life. You point out to them where they're failing, where they're falling short, what they're not doing. You have become, as it were, somebody in the bleachers and not somebody on the playing fields.

I, in high school and college, played quarterback. Having played quarterback on the field, I can tell you this: it's a lot easier to **judge** a quarterback than to **be** a quarterback. Yesterday, stadiums across this country were filled with a hundred thousand people, all desperate for exercise, watching 44 people exhausted. That's the state of the church. Most of you want to sit in the bleachers and watch the game in front of you and criticize it. It is so easy to be a Monday morning quarterback! And the one thing I can tell you that I do not do - having been a quarterback - is critique quarterbacks on Monday. I know what it feels like to have to go down the field with two minutes left and score a touchdown to win the game. And I can tell you I never did it. I know how it is to throw a pass to a guy doing a square out and watching the cornerback, intercept that, and run for a touchdown and lose the game. I know the feeling, and therefore when quarterbacks make mistakes, I get it. I'm a choker, but I played the game. And some of you need to get out of the bleachers and start playing the game, because it's a lot harder than it looks from the bleachers.

It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who actually is in the arena, who at best knows in the end, the triumph of a great achievement and who at its worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring really gratefully and greatly, so that his place will never be with those cold timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat. ~ Theodore Roosevelt.

And so I call on you who are afraid to fail. It's okay to fail. I call on you who don't know if you can do anything, or if you can do anything better than anybody else, or somewhere along the line, you may do it wrong. I call on you to fail boldly, get in the game. Walk, get out of the bleachers. Paul says, in a sense, Paul comes into the art museum and says, you've studied the art long enough. Now come on out and live life. Get down on the field.

Grace is not opposed to effort. It is opposed to earning. ~ Dallas Willard.

Our walk demonstrates our belief. And so if you want to know what you believe, sit back and think through this week and what you did and did not do, how you obeyed and did not obey, what you worried about and was anxious about and did not pray about, where you found your confidence, where you invested in the kingdom of heaven. Look at your behavior, look at your walking, and you will know.

Ephesians 4:1,

I therefore, a prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called. Why? Why?

Because somebody is watching you. There's always somebody watching us.

Gandhi, the great leader of India, when he was studying in London was very intrigued by Jesus Christ. He would spend much of his time reading the gospels. He was very engaged in wanting to know everything there was about Jesus and talked to others about Jesus. And eventually one of his friends said, 'Why if all that you do and all that you talk about and how you admire Christ so much, why don't you become a Christian?' And Gandhi's response was this, 'When I meet a Christian who is a follower of Christ, I may consider it.'

Verse one, *I, there a prisoner of the Lord urge you to walk. And now here it is: in a manner **worthy***. It's a rich, rich word. It's literally a word used of a scale. You put a weight on one end, you put meat or money on the other end, and if they balanced, they were equal. Paul says to live your life in equal balance to the finished work of Jesus Christ, that your life would be worthy of all that He has done.

Philippians 1:27 says this,

... only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel.

The beauty is to discover that God Himself personally called you. That's what implied in that word **called**. You got a phone call from God who called you by name to be His son or daughter. Paul wants you to know that the call was personal, not abstract, not theological. It was a personal call to you, but not only was it a personal call to you, but it was initiated by Him to you. Do you understand the beauty of that? You don't go looking for God. God goes looking for you. He is the hound of heaven. He pursues you in a world that tells you that you have no significance and you're not attractive enough. You're not worthy enough. You can live your life knowing that God initiated the relationship with you. You didn't try to get His attention. You didn't go knocking on His door like I did with flowers for a girl and they didn't care. You didn't do that with God. He did that with you!

Now, if that doesn't make you feel special, I have got nothing else to give you. God personally takes the initiative to encounter you, to have a relationship with you. But there's even more in that word, called. It has the idea of exhortation. What he's saying is, here's what I want you to do, I want you to live a life, not just 50%, Jesus, not a hundred percent, I want you to live a life 150% Jesus. You have been called and because it's so wonderful, so majestic, so amazing, give it all you got. That's what that word called means.

But there's another meaning in that word called. The image is you're standing outside of a tall building and unbeknownst to you a piano that was being lifted up to an apartment on the fourth floor has come off its ropes and is now falling. And somebody calls out to you get out of the way. When God calls you, He calls you out of a world crumbling, out of darkness, out of decadence, out of what will hurt you. He warns you in his call. He says, get out of the way. This whole thing is going down. A piano is falling and you're underneath it. Move, walk is the idea there, but there's more harm to that word call, because He calls you to service. He calls you not just to sit. He calls you to serve.

Verse 11 of chapter four,

And he gave the apostles and the prophets and the evangelists and the shepherd and teachers.

He's regarding the church now. So Paul says, God placed apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers to the church. Here is what's key about those words. They're all speaking ministries. We change as a result of being taught. The renewing of our mind. God brings into the church people that are to teach, speak His word, breathe His words out from their soul to your soul, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Now look at verse 12,

To equip the saints for the work of the ministry. My job is not to do the work of ministry in this church. I know you think you hired me to do that. And I know the 75 hours sure does look like that, but I'm failing you by doing the work of the ministry. And the reason I'm failing you is because God has appointed shepherds not to do the work of the ministry, but look at verse 12, *to equip **you** to do the work of the ministry.*

For what? *For the building up of the body of Christ until we attain to the unity of the faith.* God longs, God desires the church to be unified. When the church is disunified, it grieves Him. I've never seen the church more divided than it is right now. We are not united. We are not unified. We have taken

our eyes off Jesus, who is the author and the finisher of our faith, and we put it around all the incidentals. We are not unified any longer because we're broken into tribes; tribes of red and blue, tribes of Democrats and Republicans, tribes of Conservatives and Progressive's, tribes of vaccines and no vaccines, tribes of mask and no mask, and the list goes on. We are so divided that I believe that Satan is howling with laughter at the fact that you will allow somebody, whether they wear a mask or not, or got a shot or not, or voted for Biden or not, or whatever the issue is that you allowed to divide you from them. John in John chapter 17, Jesus, His last prayer to the Father is that we would be one. And so this concept that we are to attain to the unity of the faith is that we come together, we become united.

Church people seldom use the word **we** or **our** anymore. We've lost those words. We talk about I: my, my faith in Jesus, my walk, my devotions, and yet the scriptures constantly called us into this unity that when Jesus says, here's a prayer for you, **our** father who art in heaven, when Jesus in his prayer says, give **us** this day, our daily bread, when it says in Him, **we** have redemption through His blood. And so when Paul is going to drive us to this unity, it's because we, you and I, have put our eyes on Jesus and we are brothers and sisters and everything else is second.

Verse 14,

... so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunningness, by craftiness and deceitful schemes.

What is he saying there? That there will be people who will go into any church and distort the painting that Christ has finished, and they do it brilliantly. Verse 15,

... rather speaking the truth in love we are to grow up. That's a great phrase. We were to grow up, but not just grow up, *grow up in every way into Him, who is the head, into Christ from whom the*

whole body joined and is held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

The reason that the church limps every week is because some of you are not participating in the body. You're not bringing your gifts. You think the walk that God calls us to - forgive me - is from your car to the pew, then back to your car. That's what the walk is for you. And yet Jesus, Paul calls us into the sense that every person who has put their faith in Jesus Christ, who sits at the painting, now gets up and begins to live a life using your God-given talents, gifts, ability to somehow encourage and breathe life into somebody else. The ultimate outcome is that we become loving first.

John 3:11,

... for this is the message that you've heard from me from the very beginning: that we should love one another.

The church is the place where the incomplete, the unfinished, and even the unhealthy are welcome. ~ Mike Yaconelli. And I believe Jesus agrees. He goes on to say, **nothing in the church makes people in the church more angry than grace. Listen, it's ironic. We stumble into a party we weren't invited to, and find the uninvited, and we stand at the door, making sure no other uninvited guests get in. Then a strange phenomenon occurs. As soon as we are included in the party because of Jesus's irresponsible love we decide to make grace more responsible by overcoming self-appointed kingdom monitors, guarding the kingdom of God, keeping the riff raff out.**

Jesus allowed a woman who was nothing more than a prostitute to wash His feet, ministered to a woman who had been married five times and was on her way to a sixth, stood by a woman who was about to be stoned because she had just been caught in the act of adultery. That gracious Jesus is the

Jesus that you have been called by. If the church is to be anything, it is to be a place where people find love.

But here is the key. He calls us to something higher than ourselves. When you decide to follow Jesus, when you decide to walk with Jesus, we no longer need to do what we want. We no longer need to do what's best for us. We no longer need to do what we need. We no longer need to use power and position.

Matthew 4:19,

'I will make you fishers of men.' Immediately, they left their nets and followed Him, and going on from there, He saw two brothers, James and John, in the boat with their father, mending their nets. And He called, remember the word called? and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed Him.

What does it mean to walk and follow Jesus? It means to say yes to him and no to everything else that is greater in value than Him. When you decide to follow Jesus, you leave everything that is not saying yes to Him. Jesus is walking by and He sees these disciples and He says, *follow me*. And what do they do? They immediately drop their nets. What is their nets? Their nets is their livelihood, right? That's their job. That's their security. And they drop their nets. Why? Because it is an incredibly dangerous thing to try to follow Jesus and drag your net, because as you're dragging your net, it gets hung up on things. And you find yourself getting further and further behind because you spend all of your time trying to untangle the net from what's holding you back, only to drag it further, and it's on a bush and it's on a rock and it tangled behind a tree, and it's all sorts of things. And it becomes a very difficult thing to follow Jesus and drag the net. And some of you are dragging the net and I'm saying, let go. Think of it. And when Jesus said, *follow me*, they had to get out of the boat. Some of you are stuck in the boat.

Some of you are stuck with relationships. You're stuck with worries. You're stuck with addictions. You're stuck, and you won't get out of the boat, and you can't figure out why your Christian life doesn't mean anything, because you're dragging a net that's getting hung up on a whole lot of other things. And you're trying to get to Jesus and stay in the boat of security.

So, here's the truth. What your kids need, what your spouse needs, is for you to love Jesus more than you love them. Because when you love Jesus more than you love them, you will love them more than you love them. Now that's the ironic twist in this story.

So, what is it that you're hanging on to? What's the idol? What are you holding so, so tightly that you can't let go of?

Here's the tragedy of the story of the Titanic. Do you know the first half of the lifeboats that left, left empty, or only a quarter full? It wasn't because people were selfish and pushing each other out of the way. It's that you don't need a lifeboat when you're on the Titanic: it's the unsinkable ship. And so people were on the deck watching the lifeboats go out half full, but it was okay because they were on the Titanic. In fact, let me push the metaphor. They were down in the gift shop. They were buying little cups and t-shirts that said, 'I made the first maiden voyage of the Titanic!' They're cluttered in the gift shop and the boat is going down.

The sooner you understand the finished work of Christ, then no matter what He calls you to do, it is insignificant compared to what He has done for you. And no matter how much you think you love Him, it is insignificant to how much He loves you. And no matter what you give Him, it's insignificant to what He will give you. And the more you study that finished work of art, that piece called Salvation, all of your living will become easier.

You can live your life in grace and peace and be someone who loves people unconditionally, and invite as many people as possible into the art museum to see what Christ has done. And because you live light and love and salt, they are intrigued by why you can be so calm and so peaceful and so gracious and so loving, and little do they know it's because you've sat in the finished work of Christ. And because you've sat, now you're ready to walk, because of what has been done.