

LIVE WORTHY

Sermon by Pastor Scott Lowther

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I've had a pretty rough day this week. Felt like I got hit by a bus. It's been rough. A person that I know when I went on a retreat when I was a teenager. I think I had shared this with you before. I had received the Lord at this retreat. One of the girls that was on our trip there, she was a friend of the family, and she died today, just a few hours before I came here. My mom had called me, telling me how she died a godly woman's death. She was young too, younger than me. She was on her death bed, struggling with cancer and she said "You know what, today is the day I'm going to be with Jesus". My mom said she was greatly encouraged by this. We are going to talk about our walks with the Lord today. The thing that struck me so powerfully was that she had her time, and Paul had his time and Peter had his time and everybody had their time and we are like a vapor for a little while and then we disappear and we're gone. But she walked with the Lord and the evidence of that walk with the Lord sustained her during the most difficult seasons. So she died well. Her time is finished, she's off with the Lord, but we are still alive, so this is our time. This is a time for us. This is a time that God has given. This is a season, whatever it is, one more day, one more hour or maybe for some 50 years. I just don't know. This is your time. You'll need to redeem it; you'll need to understand it; you'll need to be discerning of it; and you'll need to see what God's passion for your heart is for it.

I want to give you a background of what we are going to talk about. It's not psychology but it's a well-known method of why people think the way that they do and there's a reason why I am giving them to you.

TACIT KNOWLEDGE

I want to talk to you a little bit about *tacit knowledge*. Do you guys know what that is? Most people don't because they don't care! They're like "Who cares, I can't handle regular knowledge. I don't want anything with an extra fancy name to it!" *Tacit Knowledge* is the background knowledge that you have without knowing that you have it. It's the operating system. Remember I talked about this a few weeks ago. It's the operating system upon which the rest of your regular thinking mergers and works and interacts with. The definition of it I pulled from Wikipedia. It says:

"The unwritten, unspoken, hidden vast storehouse of knowledge held by practically every normal human being (that knocks us out!). Based upon his or her emotions, experiences, insight, intuition, observations and internalize information, Tacit Knowledge is acquired largely through association with other people and requires joint or shared activities to be imparted from one to another. It constitutes the bulk of what one knows and forms the underlying framework that makes explicit knowledge possible."

Here's an example: Bike riding. It's something that you have that you don't really know how to explain or put down in writing. You just do it because you can. It's that natural reaction; it's that intuitiveness, instinctiveness; it's what you possess; it's the operating system of all that you glean. The reason I mention it to you is twofold. First of all, the natural man. The natural Tacit Knowledge that you have apart from Jesus Christ according to **1 Corinthians 2:14**: ***"The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God.."*** That ***tacit knowledge*** that you have is the reason why you can hear spiritual truth and one day be so on fire for him and go "man, that's really awesome" and then a couple of days later go "that just doesn't make sense to me, that's ridiculous". It's because it is not compatible. It's like trying to stick a Mac operating system on a PC. It's just not compatible; you're going to have issues.

We're going to talk about our walks today. When we talk about things such as that or even when we talked about last Saturday's business meeting, the topic of church discipline was mentioned and people go "what the heck is church discipline for, that doesn't seem very loving". I originally was going to come and share and talk about the purpose of what that is, but people would think I have an alternative motive, so I am letting that go for another day. The point is, those things are really true and biblical but our preconceived ideas, our ***tacit*** way of thinking keeps kicking those out: it doesn't seem loving; it doesn't seem nice; it doesn't seem appropriate.

The bible is very much not compatible with much of the thinking from the world, the flesh, or the devil. Your operating system must be upgraded. I'm trying to put it in a simple way to not make fun of something but to bring truth to you so you see that we talk about a topic that is so critical you don't let your ***tacit*** thinking knock it out. You don't let it push it aside; you don't say, "That doesn't apply to me. It's not important to me". ***Romans 12:2 "be transformed by the renewing of your mind"***

SYSTEM UPGRADE

LOST

TO

REDEEMED

666

777

You need a system upgrade from the Lost 666 - if you don't know Jesus - to the Redeemed 777 – you need the Holy Spirit Clean Sweep Program that will remove all viruses, Trojans, worms, lockups and all that other stuff so that truth will operate properly. Our system needs to be cleansed out sometimes in some of the ways that we think. We come from darkness to light but we bring a lot of baggage with us and we bring a lot of thinking with us, don't we? Often when you are talking truth with somebody they say crazy things like, (this is how you know they have this ***tacit*** thinking, it's "Adam's" version though, it needs to be upgraded to "The Divine" version) "Well that doesn't make sense to me." Natural man will never understand spiritual things, they need to be revealed. You need God to open up your eyes to see

them so that you would behold beautiful and wonderful things in His life. You are not going to get it just by reading it. You need the Holy Spirit to open up the reality of it to you.

Why am I bringing this up? My fear is that a lot of people continue to bring that up as they go forward. One guy, months ago, said “I can’t go to church where they tell me I need to obey God. That’s legalism”. I could not believe I was hearing that. I just couldn’t fathom it. I thought “man, you are going to have a tough deal with Jesus one day, buddy”. **“Why do you call me Lord, Lord and don’t do what I say?”** It’s not legalistic to tell people this is what scripture teaches. But that **tacit** way of thinking of saying “I want Jesus to do all that dying. I don’t want to walk with Him. I don’t want to do that. I want somebody else to do it for me!” It’s that kind of thinking that causes us to really have issue in our walks and not make progress.

So this girl at that retreat received the Lord the same day as me. She died today. That’s why I’m being so serious about it. You don’t know what each day will hold for you. You need to learn to walk and trust the Lord for today. Let me ask you some questions: Any of you members of a society or an organization or one of those things that you join? There are certain requirements that are held up for you if you are going to be one of the Beavers, Badgers, Elks, Moose’s or whatever it is to join. Whatever club you join there is a requirement, right? It’s the same with Christianity. It’s true in a country. It’s true in a job. When you get a job they say what’s required of you. It’s not show up whenever you feel like it. So God lays out requirements for us too, but people think if you talk about them somehow you are being legalistic and you’re trying to steal the joy of their salvation from them. In reality all you are trying to do is say “You know what, God has way better for you than what you have”. If you begin to walk with you Him you experience His hand upon your life. You’re being robbed. You’re being robbed by that **tacit** thinking that keeps kicking things out saying “works is not compatible with grace” – kick it out! God has prepared good works that we should walk in by grace.

You know what happens when you don’t meet the requirements of your organization or if particularly you are in the government? This was written in the paper of many politicians. It said “they were simply unworthy of the office”. I want you to notice that when we are talking about the “office” here, we are not talking about the worth of the man; we are talking about the worth of the office. What made this person so despised was that the office was so great and they didn’t live up to the office. Whether you are talking about Weiner, Nixon, Clinton, Edwards, Schwarzenegger – the list is endless – they proved themselves unworthy of the office. Catholic priests in many sense the same way. What happens when somebody does that? It not only fuels antagonism towards the people who do it, it fuels antagonism to the office itself. Right? I’m certain not every Catholic priest is a child molester. I’m certain of that but people talk like they are. I’m certain, well I’m hoping, there’s a politician somewhere that isn’t corrupt and hopeless. I’m hopeful for that but people despise the office now, don’t they?

Peter in Acts 1:20 is quoting this passage on Judas: ***Psalms 109:8: “May his days be few; may another take his office”***. Imagine Judas now. Here’s a guy who was an Apostle of Jesus Christ. Think of the office. One of 12. You are an Apostle of Jesus Christ. Peter said **“may another take his office”** but for us, for our purposes, look at it like this: Is there any greater calling? Is there any greater purpose? Was there any greater position that a person could hold than to be an Apostle of Jesus

Christ? Absolutely not. But Judas did not love that calling. He didn't care about that calling. He cared about the money. John tells us that he was "a thief". Normally what would have happened is a person's estimation of the office would have been so high that it would have stopped him for desecrating it. When Judas fell; when he was gone; when he killed himself – it brought reproach. Not just upon Judas as a person but upon the office of an Apostle.

What I am trying to share with you guys is that when the public has less respect for the people who have been given a wonderful office, it blackens the office altogether. We are Christians; we are people of the Lord. With that comes responsibility from the word of God. There is no greater calling; there is no higher office. Why does the Christian church, and I don't mean this one in particular, by and large have a horrible reputation? Because the people don't live up to the high calling of the office. They don't see it as a high calling. They don't see it as glory. They don't see any value in it. So many people have not lived up to the calling, that the church is despised by many. That's not effective for witness; that's not effective for ministry; it's not effective for anything.

What Paul is going to do; he's going to write to the people of Ephesus; he's already prayed for them and he's going to encourage them with one long exhortation. It's the longest exhortation in the bible. Half of the book is an exhortation. It will be very insightful to break it down and look at it.

Ephesians 4:1-6: "I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

The first 3 chapters give us our rights and privileges. They give us our blessings in Christ. Our spiritual perks, if you will. The last 3 chapters are going to give us the application part of the book; it is going to give us the requirement. I hate using the word requirement because it's not a burden to serve the Lord. It really isn't. It is a joy. So it isn't a requirement in the sense that it's a "bummer day's duty" instead it's a "delightful day's duty". So these last 3 chapters are the exposition of verse 1 Chapter 4. Paul says, "I am a prisoner for the Lord and I want you to walk in a worthy manner". Then the next 3 chapters are going to break that down. So there is no other book where ½ of the book is an exhortation. This is the only one so I think it is really profound and it would be a great disservice if we just blew through it. So today we are going to talk specifically about what's this unity of body; what does this walk look like. As we do that there are 4 or 5 different walks that are going to be mentioned through the next few chapters and we'll look at those specifically. Chapter 4 is a transition from know to do; from principle to practice; from doctrine to discipline; from worship to walk; seeing to being. You can put it any way you want but there's a transition here. There's a transition of what should be true of you if you receive this high calling. So let's break this down verse by verse.

Verse 1: ***"I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called"***. The Apostle Paul had many jobs, for lack of a better term. He was a

tentmaker for one; he's an apostle for another. I think his most interesting job is one most people don't see when they read scripture, was a beggar. I don't mean beggar in the sense of looking for coins. He was a beggar in the sense of his passion for ministry. It's coming for these words "***I urge you***". When Paul was before King Agrippa he said this in

Acts 26:3: "I beg you to hear me patiently".

Romans 12: 1 "I beg you therefore brethren by the mercies of God that you present your body as a living sacrifice".

1 Corinthians 4:16: "Wherefore I beg you to be imitators of me"

2 Corinthians 2:8: "I beg you that you would confirm your love toward Him"

2 Corinthians 5:20: "We beg you in Christ's stead, be reconciled in God"

Galatians 4:12: "Brethren I beg you to be as I am"

So his urging, his begging, his passion is in pleading with the people for something to be true of them. So when I say he is a beggar, I don't mean he's looking for change under the seats when you guys leave. I'm saying he had a heart for the people so much so that it fueled something in him that he implored the people on God's behalf to cry out to them for something. It's the same word he's using here. He says "I'm urging you that something would be true of you". He's begging them. He's not just commanding that something would be done. He not just saying "look, this is your responsibility, get with it and suck it up!" He doesn't do that. He's pleading, he's begging, he's crying out saying "God, let this be true of them. I pray that you would see this. I'm begging you to walk worthy".

Why should somebody walk worthily anyways? Why would you care? Well, until you walk worthily

- 1) God is not fully glorified in your life.
- 2) You're not fully blessed
- 3) The church cannot fully function
- 4) The world cannot fully see Jesus Christ as He should be seen

So that is Paul's heart. He said "I want you to walk in a worthy manner." I literally translated this verse from the Greek from every kind of definition I could pull and I hope the way I wrote it down makes sense to you: "I admonish you to worthily live the calling you were called into". So Paul is saying "I'm pleading with you that you fulfill your calling". Every Christian is called by God. Everyone has a calling. Paul says not only make your calling an election sure but he says I am passionately pleading with you that you would fulfill it. That you would walk in a way that would honor it. That you would walk in a way that glorifies it. That you would understand the high calling of being named by the King of the Universe. You belong to the one who spoke all things into existence and you bear His name.

It's interesting that Paul doesn't first come up with a bunch of action steps to take. He doesn't start throwing out verbiage, does he? He doesn't say "now, do, do, do, do". He starts not from action verbs; he starts from attributes and attitudes. Because from the right attitude comes the appropriate action. It's not a matter of what you do at first; it's a matter of who you are. Christianity is about being; not about doing. When you are what you should be, then from that flow deeds. If you have the doing without the being, you have legalism and you have a very depressed life. If you have the being followed by the doing, you have joy. So that's why he wants to start with these attitudes.

"I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called". Let's look at the word "worthy". Worthy would indicate that there is some kind of standard to be judged by, right? There is obviously something that somebody should hold up and say "this would be the standard that would make something worthy or unworthy". That just is common sense to us. It should be, right? So he is saying "I want you to walk worthily". There's a standard to which Paul is expecting the readers in Ephesus to conform their lives to. So he says "I want you to walk in that way"; "I'm begging you to walk in that way". His heart is that they would.

Walk is a word in and of itself that we could spend the whole day on. Literally walk doesn't mean pace back and forth; it means "a manner of life or your conduct". That you would conduct yourself in direct proportion to the honor and glory of the office that you've been given. You've been given a high office and that high office dictates a lowly, humble walk. We want to look specifically at that. There are 5 or 6 walks that we are going to look at before we finish this book, if the Lord is gracious to us. As a matter of fact, the whole last 3 chapters are about walk, walk, walk. I'll give you some of them:

Chapter 4:1-8 – walk in unity.

At the end of ***Chapter 4*** there is a unique walk. It's walking other than the Gentiles do, so it is something distinctive – which should be true of our walks.

Chapter 5 – there is a love walk and a wise walk

Chapter 5:8 – there's a spirit filled walk

Chapter 6 – has a warfare walk

So it is constantly about our conduct and how we are supposed to live. I can tell by the way you guys are looking that you're thinking "I don't want to hear about how I am supposed to live. I'm having a hard enough time living a regular life, so I don't want any more!" I'm coming to you like Paul. I'm pleading with you – to walk in a manner worthy of the calling that you have. Because it will change what you are feeling now to joy. I want you to have joy. Because where you are at right now is probably not so good. But you will have joy if you begin to walk in a way that is worthy of the calling that you have been given. God says so.

Let your lifestyle be worthy of the vocation to which He's called you. ²***with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*** There are 4 interlocking, progressive, attitudes that should be true of us and Paul wants to be true of the people of Ephesus so that the result would be unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. So we are looking for is that unity and after this comes that 7 "one" statements which we'll look at next week: One faith, one baptism, one Lord, etc. We'll look at that later. I want to focus on these 4 attitudes as they progress in our lives. By and large I think there is unity in the church. I think there is room for plenty more. I think there is plenty more to pull away some of the things that are keeping us from being unified. If a work of grace is taking place in any of our lives, any work of grace at all, there is a fundamental underlying unity that is already there. It's purchased; it's there. But it is all our ***facit*** thinking that keeps it from connecting. So that's why we are going to talk about a clean, reboot format C or whatever it is, to start and format to bring back this unity that the Lord gives.

Do you know what the difference between **attitude** fruit and **activity** fruit? There's a difference. The **attitude** fruit is in *Galatians 5:22: "The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control"*. Those aren't **action**, they are **attitude** fruits. Then there are **action** fruits which are do, do, do. But the **attitude** fruit always has to come first to have true spirituality when it is expressed in deeds of love. If you have the **action** fruit, bad fruit, without the good **attitude** first, you have legalistic, moralistic deism that God hates and people can't continue to do. It produces pharisees and it's very unhealthy and it will make you miserable.

What God put through Paul to speak to the people at Ephesus was there are these 4 interlocking things that he wants to be true of them. So we are going to be talking about these things: to maintain unity, to pursue unity, what brings unity. Before we look at that specifically I think we'll have to define unity. It's not just "can't we all get along", it's more than that.

This verse is a refresher if you have been with us from the beginning. Paul said this:

Ephesians 2:13-16: ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end".

Christian unity. I am going to give you 3 passages of what Christian unity is:

(1) Ephesians 4:13 – "unity and the knowledge of the Son of God" That is unity of conviction.

We are united in our convictions of who Jesus Christ is. We are united in our doctrine. We are united in what is important. We are united in our convictions of the bible.

(2) Ephesians 4:13 – “unity of the faith”. This is unity in our confidence and expectations of things from God. So if we believe certain things about God, we have a confident expectation from God.

(3) Ephesians 2:14 – “end of hostility being replaced by love”. That is a unity of compassion.

So we have unity of conviction, confidence and compassion. These are the 3 underlying unities that bring about biblical Christian unity. Many churches have 1, maybe 2, but very few have all 3. Our goal is to bring about true, spiritual unity by focusing on those 3.

Unity of Conviction

We need to have great, solid conviction on the truth of the word of God. No waffling, no changing. Kick out and remove ever tacit thinking and renew our minds in the truth of the word of God so that we stop pushing out truth that is meant to give us stability and hope. So we push out those wrong thoughts. Scripture says “the weapons of our warfare aren’t carnal but they are mighty through God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that would exalt itself against the knowledge of God we will tear those things down”. And we will rejoice in the truth of who God is, not who we wish He was when you are walking with him but who He really is.

Unity of Faith

Our expectations. Since this is who God is, what are my expectations from Him? Are they biblical? Are they measurable? Are they achievable? Yes, Yes, Yes. Then I have a confident expectation that “he who began a good work will be faithful to complete it”. We can have confidence that because God has brought us to this point He will not abandon us and complete which he began and we should rejoice over that and not go “gee, I wonder what’s going to happen”. You know what, God’s going to happen. That what we should say, “God’s going to happen”.

Unity of Love

We need to replace that hostility. I need to be honest, there’s a little hostility in the congregation still. Not you all. I’m talking about 9:00 and 11:00 am service! And then at tomorrow sermon I’ll tell them a different time slot! There’s a little bit of tension still. I think God would just say “you know what, calm down. It’s going to be OK. Come over here and let me brush your little fuzz and I’ll pull your little burrs out, it’s going to be fine”. But we need to replace that little bit of hostility with compassion and love. If you want to define love biblically go to 2 Corinthians 8 and look it up. It’s not buy you candy and flowers.

Let’s look specifically at these 4 attitudes.

- 1) HUMILITY - This one is really important. It seems to be something of great value to God. Humility is something that is not only true of God but it is something that God holds in high honor. I’ll define humility like this: A modest estimation of one’s importance. I’m putting it in a

definition that I hope you'll grasp it. "Do not think more highly of yourself than what you are", scripture says, but think of others as better than you. If you really see the Lord for who He is, you can really say "man, I'm just a worm. I'm just a nobody". And mean it. Not falsely humble, but really mean it. So our high call should give us a very lowly walk. If you want to progress with the Lord, humility is critical. You can pray for humility and God will crush you but there are other ways to find it that are much easier on you than God's methodology. Total humility is the absence of self and selfishness. Humility is when you make a biblical estimate of yourself. So if you can't read through the first 3 chapters of Romans and go "I was a miserable wretch. I was without hope and without Christ in the world. There was nothing good in me, I never did anything good". If you can't do that, you don't have a biblical perspective of who you are outside of Christ and therefore grace doesn't matter much to you. And redemption probably doesn't mean that much to you. So it is important that you pursue humility. Pride is concerned with who is right; humility is only concerned with what is right. You don't have to be right. It matters that right is right. People say "do you care if you speak every Sunday?" I go, "I don't care as long as somebody speaks truth, I'm happy". It doesn't matter to me. It matters that truth is being taught. That's all that matters. It matters that we should humble ourselves before the Lord so that he would lift us up.

Psalms 147:6: "The Lord lifts up the humble". So humility is that modest estimation of one's own importance. Do you think you are critical to God's purposes? If you think God can't get by without me, you are not humble. Because he got by without you for a long time before he made you. Didn't he? Think about that one. There's a great book that C.J. Mahaney wrote called "Humility". He opened it up with "you would not think anybody was humble who would write a book about humility. He spoke at this conference we were at last month and he stepped down and said he was taking some time off. We all thought "oh, what heinous evil did he commit". We were all rubbing our hands to find out what he did so badly. He said "I don't think I am as humble as I should be and I need to take some time off because God has given me too many things which would make it easy for me to glory myself. I'm stepping down and still going to attend the events but I'm just going to watch because I want to see God use somebody else". Now that's the mark of somebody who is humble. It's a mark of somebody who gets it. So humility is critical for us to progress with the Lord.

- 2) MEEKNESS - Now from humility, if you humble yourself God will lift you up and from that comes meekness. Meekness isn't weakness. I define meekness like this: Humble under-provocation from others. How's that for a definition! That's a good biblical definition. Adam Clarke, a great commentator from 100 or so years ago wrote this: **Meekness is an inwrought grace of the soul and the exercises of it are first and chiefly towards God. It is that temperance spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as always good and therefore without disputing or resisting, meekness is the opposite of self-assertiveness and self-interest. It is neither elated nor is it cast down simply because it does not occupy with self at all.** That's meekness. This is the way Jesus lived his life. He said of himself "I am meek and lowly of heart".

Meekness is that trait that allows you to be humble even when others provoke you. It allows you to stand up under it and say “strength under control”. It’s that ability that when you are reviled you don’t answer back with reviling. It is that ability that Jesus had when He was brought before Pilate “as a sheep before a shearer is silent, so He did not open His mouth”. It is the ability to be meek and say “God will avenge me. God will repay. I will submit myself to Him because I recognize that whatever He brings in my life He brings it in for my good and for His honor to conform me in the image of His Son and for that I see as gain”. It’s that wonder mature trait that helps us have unity. Most of the time we don’t get along is because of what? I think somebody owes me something. If you would recognize that nobody owes you anything except discipline, and God doesn’t owe us anything except hell, we would really come to grips with the fact that God has been gracious to give anything at all, and from that freedom and graces comes love. That love should be flowing but we have an expectation from people, or I expect this from somebody, chances are you’re neither humble nor meek. Meekness is always one to give for the glory of God. Humility considers others as better than them and isn’t the first in line to take the best of everything but will wait until everybody else goes. And if there is nothing left up there, fine, for they don’t care. I think that is how God would have us see. Meekness happens when the Holy Spirit opens our eyes so that we see the majesty of God and then we see our self for what we really are apart from Him, which isn’t a good thing.

John Piper said this: **“Meekness will roar when God is offended but will keep its’ mouth tightly shut when self is”**. I like that one a lot. I think it all implies the same thing. Meekness is quiet, willing submission to God and to others so that none of the rebellion, revenge, retaliation and self-assertiveness from Adam is seen. It’s that ability to maintain godliness under pressure and opposition from ungodly people. It’s a great, great, attitude and attribute that we should have in our lives. It’s a gift from God.

Moses was known as the meekest of men. If you read **Numbers 12:3**, which is funny and I told you this before, because Moses wrote Numbers. He said **“There was nobody in all the land more humble (King James says “meek”) than Moses”**. And yet God didn’t say he lied. This is crazy. I can imagine the Holy Spirit leading Moses to write “there is nobody more humble than me. This is awesome. What else does God have to say about me?” “Nothing, God says, “Because I need to keep you humble”. You look at Moses and he wasn’t weak though. He wasn’t a guy who was timid, was he? He was a man who was passionate. He got angry when Israel sinned against God in Exodus 32. He was a man of huge passion. You wouldn’t consider Moses a push-over. I believe there were days when he stood with his staff and said “Thus saith the Lord” and the power of God was there. I bet it was terrifying. So when you looked at Moses you wouldn’t say “cowardly, weak, wimpy”. You would say, “There is a man (except when he struck the rock twice) under the discipline of God. Faithful, humble and meek. Not exalting himself, not exalting his position but serving, caring and leading the people”.

So what about Jesus? **Matthew 11:29: "Jesus is meek and humble in heart"**. And yet He became very angry and flipped over the tables in Matthew 21 when there were thieves in the temple. He said **"My Father's house is a house of prayer"**. So His passion was still there. Meekness doesn't mean you don't have any passion. As a matter of fact meekness means you have a lot of passion but you control it. You're angry when things go against God; when somebody blasphemes God; when somebody is promoting sin; when somebody promotes wickedness; when good is called evil; and evil is called good. You should be angry when false teachers come along; you should be angry when false teaching comes along; you should be angry because it steals life from people. You should have that same kind of zeal. It doesn't mean you are pushover wimpy. It means you are patient under opposition.

- 3) PATIENCE - This means steadily persevering. So lowliest to meekness to patience. Humility is the pre-requisite for patience. You will never be patient if you are not humble. I'll tell you the best way you can find out if you are humble. Did you ever go to a restaurant and say "Where the heck is that waitress, I've been waiting so long?" Why do you do that? Because you are not humble. Think it though. You're thinking that you deserve better. Right? You're like "I've been sitting here for 5 minutes. Those other people already got their coffee. Don't they know who I am? I deserve better." So our impatience is the reflection of "who do they think they are keeping me waiting like this?" Patience again is a fruit of humility. If you are not humble, you'll never be patient. If you are like, "man, I'm so tired of waiting for what God to do what He is supposed to do". I go, "whoa, you're not very humble." You go, "no I'm not patient". I go "but you're not humble either". Who do you think you are to talk back to God? Shall the potter say to Him who formed him, "why do you make me thus or why are you doing thus"? No. Don't you understand that God isn't slow in keeping his promises, that some consider slowness? **"He is not willing that people should perish but that all should come to repentance"**. He is not slow with you. He's working – maybe baking in the oven but you've got to be in there for a few more minutes. You don't want to come out all gooey, you've got to be cooked! So He's working on you so don't be impatient.

Patience is the ability (a mechanic friend of mine said this) to idle your motor when you feel like stripping your gears. I'll give you a better spiritual definition from Thomas a Kempis. He describes patience in these words: **"He deserves not the name of patient who is only willing to suffer as much as he thinks proper and for whom he only pleases. The truly patient man asks nothing from whom he suffers whether his superior, his equal or his inferior, but from whomever or however much or how often wrong is done to him; he accepts it all as from the hand of God and counts it solely gain"**. That's patience.

Patience comes from the fruit of right perspective of who God is. If you are impatient it's very likely that your perspective of God is askew and your tacit thinking doesn't allow you to have a God who is sovereign who works everything after the counsel of his will for the good of his people. You want a God who is more like your grandpa. Who, when you snap your fingers, he jumps, because you've got him wrapped around your fingers! That is not God. And certain not God of the bible.

James 5:10: "As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord". So in other words, if you want to be patient and long suffering, remember the prophets. You can pick anyone you want. God gives us a whole plethora of them. I picked one that I think is probably a good prophet to pick for the sake of what we are going through. How about Jeremiah? You know the story of Jeremiah? Great prophet, big giant book in the bible. Isaiah and Jeremiah are the 2 big thunderous prophets to Israel. Jeremiah was given a message from God and God basically told him this: "Jeremiah I'm calling you. I'm giving you a message". Jeremiah goes "oh, I'm excited". God says, "Don't be. They are not going to listen to you at all. They will hate you. They will persecute you. They are going to throw you in prison. They are not going to believe you. They are going to make you fearful. Nobody is going to believe what you say and in your whole life you are going to speak and nobody is going to care. And it is going to bother you so much that you are going to write a book called Lamentations, where you just weep over the fact that everything is so horrible. So that's your life, Jeremiah". So what's Jeremiah's response, "I don't want to do it?" Jeremiah was a model of somebody who is endlessly patient, endlessly persevering, endlessly compassionate with people who are stiff-necked and rebellious who hate him.

God through Paul to the Ephesus church to us today is saying this: "you know what, imitate people like that". You think your life is difficult, let me show you a life that is really difficult too. Consider this guy or consider Isaiah. Solomon too. They put him in a log and cut him in half! Consider Paul. People told him to don't go to Jerusalem because they are going to kill him there. He said in **Acts 20:22** **"I know, the Holy Spirit tells me that bonds and afflictions await me but none of these things move me, neither do I count my life as dear to myself. I just want to finish the course in the ministry which Jesus has given me"**. Do you hear it? Even when God tells him that bonds and difficulty awaits you, he says "I know". The other guys say "We're prophets and we're trying to give you warning so that you can side skirt that and have ease and comfort". And Paul goes "No, I know what God's plan is for me. He's made it clear to me. And I know what awaits me and I don't care. What I care about is finishing well. What I care about (in our vernacular for today) is walking worthy of the call. Because it is a high call. Lowly walk, high call and I'm not going to skirt it and walk around it. I want to die well". He's had his time and he's still reaping fruit as we read about his life.

The girl from my teenage retreat. She lived her life. She's reaping the fruit of walking well. I know she walked well because my mom knew her well. My mom is a really devout Christian and she said she died well. She died well because she walked well. They are interrelated.

- 4) **BEARING** - This simple means this: To hold up. Endurance is the demeanor of patience. You can be patient but endurance is keeping at it and keeping at it and keeping at it. Even when you don't seem to be getting any results. You keep at it because God has said that's the way to go. I think for a lot of us we begin to walk in obedience with the Lord; we start taking steps that we know we should take and we don't see any instant fruit. Right? We don't see what we thought we would get right away. We thought if we get baptized and do that one thing, all of a sudden he would make me a millionaire. It doesn't work like that, does it? Instead of praying

for earthly gain maybe you should say “Lord, what I want is to be able to finish well. I want my life to have a walk that is lowly and humble and patient and enduring. And I want to walk worthy of the call of somebody who has your name on them who has been bought by your blood”. God would jump all over that pray in a heartbeat!

So often we ask as James says “we ask and miss”. We ask and miss that we would spend it on something else. We don’t ask with good motive; we don’t ask for God to be glorified. We ask for all the other stuff instead of the heart of the issue of what God is really after.

We are to maintain unity. The word simply means: To guard, to keep your eye upon, to prevent it from escaping. Or this one is even better: To keep it in unblemished condition. The unity has already been purchased, it’s already here, we just need to get below the surface and root out the differences. If anybody has any we need to push those aside and we’ll discover that in that work of grace of redemption that Jesus Christ has purchased a wonderful unity that abides for all his people. And the reason, like I said, we don’t get it so much is because we let this *tacit* thinking kick it out.

I’m trying to figure out the best way that I can explain it to you in a way to respond to and I came up with John 9:22. This is the Apostle John who is writing about the life of Jesus Christ. You know the story well. This is when Jesus makes his famous mud pie and rubs it on the guys face. He’s blind so Jesus heals him. What happens from this are the leaders, the spiritual leaders who are blind themselves, and they decided they wanted to investigate. Whenever unbelievers investigate a miracle, you know there is going to be a problem. You’ve got a bunch of unbelievers who say “God did what? I’m going to investigate”. And that’s what the church is always being attacked by unbelievers who want to investigate what God has done. So the Pharisees are investigating and pull the guys parents aside to talk to them to find out exactly what the “skinny” is. So they say this is **John 9:22: “These words, spoke his parents, because they feared the Jews”**. What did they say that was forcing them to change their story? What was it they said? **Verse 21: “We don’t want to answer for him. He’s of age, ask him. He’ll speak for himself”**. What’s the issue here? What is the issue from stopping somebody from testifying to how great God is and what God has done? This is their son. They were like “Uh, we don’t know, we’re afraid of the Jews”. What are you afraid of? “Well, the Jews simply said this: If anyone said that Jesus is the Christ” ... What, what are they going to do? Stone you? “No. He’ll be kicked out of the synagogue”. The parents of this son won’t give God glory for what He has done because they are worried about losing their social status in the synagogue club! Do you hear how ridiculous that is? Many of us function the same way. They were so structured for acceptance in society that they were willing to: fail to glorify God; fail to walk with him; fail to honor him all because they were afraid to lose their social status. At the end of this John says this about the Pharisees “that they loved the praises of men more than the praises of God”.

I am going to show you the difference between the humility way of interpreting the bible and a narcissistic way of interpreting the bible. I’ll bring it to you like this. If you take this verse and you say “what this is saying is that Jesus is saying that if you love the praises of men more than you love the praises of God, there is something wrong with you”. What’s the object of your praise here? The object of praise if you view it that way is you. Right? “I love the praises of men. Praise me more than I love

the praises of God". That's not what this verse says at all. But if you have that *tacit* thinking, that's what you see. What the verse means is this: "They love the praises of men more than they love giving praise to God." That's what it means. You remember the interaction with the people and the parents of the son that was blind and now seeing. "Well ask him yourself. We don't want to get kicked out of the synagogue. We don't want to give God glory. We don't even want to say that Jesus did it. We don't want to give God anything because we want the praises from men". Instead of saying "you know what, it is way better to praise God". The joy that should come from a heart of God working and overflowing to glory to God is the heart of a humble man where the heart of a prideful man will only seek praise wherever he can get it. He'll take it from men first and if he can't get it there, he'll go and try and get some from God. That is the essence of pridefulness and that is the essence of being a person that will not be in unity with anybody. The Pharisees weren't in unity with the people. They looked down upon the people. They exalted themselves over the people. They loved to pray and to be seen by men. The attitude is the same. They weren't humble, patient, edifying people. They were people who loved to be the object of everybody's attention and affection.

God loving us is not doing that same thing to us. It is doing whatever he has to take so that we will not want that anymore and we will enjoy making much of Him in praising Him. That is what God's love does for us. What I think God is trying to say to us and what I got most out of this passage is simply this: God is looking for unity. Deep, abiding unity. Not that we all like surfing, or volleyball or whatever you like. Not that we like the same things. But that we have unity in truth; that we have unity in conviction; that we have unity in faith and expectation; that we have unity in the way love is manifested and expressed unto one another; and that we continually go the path of humility so that we interpret scripture and we interpret God as in the greatest thing a Christian can do is: Simply belong to the Lord. If you know who's you are and become who's you are, then what you do will be an outflow of a life that's surrendered in humility to God. If you don't do that, you will end up like this man's family and you will denounce your own son because you care more about the social aspects of life than you care about spiritual things.

When this verse came along and I read it, I thought "Lord, I see what you are trying to say. You are trying to say that it's not you are going to sit around and praise me for how great I am, because I don't do anything that is praiseworthy. The only things that you do through me, if you ever do anything, that's all you. Anything bad, that's all me. I'll own that one. But anything good comes from you. So what do we have that we didn't receive, even if we did receive it, why do we boast as if we didn't and if you are going to boast, boast in the Lord". Right? That's the heart of the matter. That is what God is after in the church. When we get that attitude you'll begin to see this genuine, legitimate, spiritual unity that fosters and fuels off the love of God.

So that's my desire. Let's pray together.

Father, thank you so much again for an opportunity to be with your people. I pray so much Lord that those things would be true of us. I thank you that in your mercy, you took my friend home today. I know that now she stands in the presence of the One who loved her and gave Himself for her. And in that presence is fullness of joy. And I know Lord that your faithful to

her she will hear “well done”. Father her race is finished but ours is not. And I pray, God earnestly I pray, that something of your word tonight would find root in our heart and would change the way we view the value of our call. We have been called by you. We are owned by you. You have purchased us. We bear the name of Jesus Christ. There is no greater calling; there is no greater honor; there is no greater anything than that. And so Father, would you please do a work in each of us that we would be changed. And would you, by your spirit, enable us to live and walk in a manner worthy of you. Father, apart from you we can do nothing. I don't want a legalistic attempt to obey you. I want a deep, abiding work of your spirit from the inside out changing us to will and then to do for your pleasure. And so Father we lay ourselves open before you. We pray that you would search us and try us. See if there be some wicked ways in us. Bring to mind those things we must turn from. Lift our head, give us hope. And Lord may you just stir us. May we hear Paul's heart and your heart urging us, compelling us, begging us to walk differently than when we came in. And for that we are very careful to praise you and thank you. In Jesus' name. Amen.