

“Therefore Christianity”

Ephesians 4:1

Introduction:

1. How would you describe the Christian life to others? What would they say about it? Finish this sentence: “Christians are people who....” Do you have your answer?

[1] Too often Christians and the world around us describe Christians in some sort of a cultural manner. For example, “Christians have conservative political views,” or “Christians are for family values,” or “Christians go to church but not to bars,” etc.

[2] However, we should ask ourselves, “Is this the right way to describe the Christian life?” What kind of picture are we leaving with our worldly friends if we set forth Christianity in those terms? What are we teaching our children if we give that impression to them?

2. True Christianity never separates faith from practice. It always says, “Here is what the Lord teaches us to believe, and the way we live is determined by what we believe.” Faith and practice form a harmonious whole.

[1] In the first three chapters of Ephesians, the Spirit through the apostle teaches us a number of great truths about God, his grace, and our new position in Christ.

[2] The last three chapters of this letter set forth the way of life that those who are in Christ must live. What we must see that this new way of life flows from and is consistent with all that we are **in Christ**.

3. How does the New Testament teach sanctification or Biblical growth? It does it by means of the small word *therefore*. You are in Christ; therefore, live as those who are in Christ ought to live.

[1] In a general sense observing the word *therefore* as we read our Bibles will make us better readers and students of the Scriptures. When you see it, stop and ask yourself, “what has the writer taught to this point? How does that connect with what he says next?”

[2] This is especially important when the Spirit of God teaches us how to live. He says, “Here is your spiritual position—all that you have in Christ. **Therefore**, live according to your position in Christ. Make your condition conform to your position.”

Illustration: One man said that you might outline Paul’s letters this way: [Biblical Growth, #3]

- “You’re tremendous; I’m encouraged about your faith in Christ!”
- “Here are six things that must change immediately or you’re in big trouble!”
- “I’m sure you’re going to change so I can hardly wait to see you!”

With this in mind, let us think on these things.

Exposition: The true Christian way of life is to walk worthy of God’s calling.

I. We must understand the calling that we have received.

A. Our calling is an act of God’s grace

1. Calling is the act of God’s grace in which he graciously draws us to Christ by the Holy Spirit. We cannot come to Christ unless we are called (Jn 6:44,65). When we are called, we freely go to Christ to be saved (Jn 6:45). God calls us to a threefold calling:

- a. We are called to be conformed to Christ — holiness. Rm 8:29
- b. We are called to share in Christ’s glory — glorification. Jn 17:24
- c. We are called to be in God’s family — unity. Eph 2:15

2. All that we have is ours through God's grace in Christ. We are right with God by grace through faith in Christ alone. If we do not keep this clear in our thinking, we develop "substitutes for the left side of the *therefore*":

- Rules
- Experiences
- Church
- Service

Quote: "Religious perversions are not produced by agnostics or atheists but by well-meaning Christians. In the attempt to cure some failure in practice, one facet of biblical Christianity has often been overemphasized. When this factor is made the central factor in Christianity, a perversion results." For example, when "the church is made the central factor in Christianity, it is utilized in at least three ways. The church is used as a source of spirituality, as a means whereby spirituality is maintained, and as the basis of measuring spirituality. The reply to the question, 'How can I become a spiritual person and then maintain my spirituality' is 'Attend church regularly.'" [Matthews, *Growth in Grace*, pp. 13-14]

Comment: If the Lord Jesus is not all on the left side, the right side will be defective also. Minimal expectations of Christian living come from a low view of the glory of Christ.

II. We must strive to make our condition conform to our position.

A. The Christian life is living out what you are in Christ. In other words, we have to match up the "left and right sides of the *therefore*". As the apostle simply says here, "Therefore... walk worthy..."

1. The Christian is someone who is a "new man" in Jesus Christ. What we were as an "old man" in Adam is past. In Adam we were in the position of sin, condemnation, and death, but in Christ we have obedience, justification, and life (Rm 5:12-21). In addition to this better position, we are also spiritually alive toward God. The New Testament says, "Here is all that you have in union with Christ; **therefore**, live in conformity with that position." For example, see Rm 12:1; Gal 5:1; Eph 4:1; Col 3:1,5,12; 1 Pt 1:13; 2 Pt 1:5; 1 Jn 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:4.

2. "It matters to Paul that Christians have been called by God. Their 'walk,' their whole manner of life, should be 'worthy' of their call. The fact that they have been objects of a divine call must affect everything they do." [Morris]

Apply: Is your lifestyle in logical agreement with what you claim to be in Christ?

B. The Christian faces at least three terrible dangers in walking according to his or her position in Christ.

1. The first danger is falling into lawlessness (antinomianism). This position pretends that the *therefore* does not exist. It says, "I'm saved by grace and nothing else matters!" Such thinking is evil to the nth degree. 2 Tm 2:19; Ti 2:11-14

2. The second danger is the desire for the quick fix. Instead of daily living by faith in Christ in order to put sin to death and live for God, some look for "instant godliness" or some other way of spirituality.

3. The third danger is that a lack of clarity about what we are in Christ can lead to equally fuzzy thinking about how we ought to live. What can happen when the right side of the *therefore* is defective? If the something besides being in Christ is the source, means and test of spirituality, it can affect how we view other aspects of the Christian life. For example, the church can become:

- A Social Club — a group of people gather in a religious context to share friendships and have parties
- A Rules Society — a group of people whose main concern is that others measure up to their strict code of conduct
- An Activity Center — a place where people gather to recruit and train people for service and who try to bring them back to the center to count the recruits
- An Emotional Theater — a place where people have an outlet for their religious emotions and in which they usually strive to have similar emotional experiences

Point: Know what you are in Christ and seek to live worthily by grace through faith.

Apply: So, how is your daily walk? Let us ask ourselves some questions!

- What about Eph 1:3? Are you living like that is true?
- What about Eph 1:14? Are you living like that is true?
- What about Eph 1:22? Are you living like that is true?
- What about Eph 2:6-7? Are you living like that is true?
- What about Eph 2:22? Are you living like that is true?
- What about Eph 3:20-21? Are you living like that is true?

“Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.”