

Coram Deo  
Soli Deo Gloria, Soli Deo Gracia, Soli Scriptura  
Agnus Dei, Qui Tollis Peccata Mundi  
Deo Volente  
Sermon Preach at Stouffville United Church  
By the Rev.Dr. John S. Niles MSM

# You Are Called to a New Way

## Series 7

*Sermon Series: Who Do You Think You Are?*

*Finding Your True Identity in Christ.*

**Ephesians 4:1-6**

***February 27, 2022***

George O. Wood writes that on October 31, 1983, Korean Airlines flight 007 departed from Anchorage, Alaska, for a direct flight to Seoul, Korea. Unknown to the crew, however, the computer engaging the flight navigation system contained a one-and-a-half-degree routing error. At the point of departure, the mistake was unnoticeable. One hundred miles out, the deviation was still so small as to be undetectable. But as the giant 747 continued through the Aleutians and out over the Pacific the plane strayed increasingly from its proper course. Eventually it was flying over Soviet air space.

Soviet radar picked up the error, and fighter jets scrambled into the air to intercept. Over mainland Russia the jets shot flight 077 out of the sky, and all aboard lost their lives.

We see major choices by Russia this past week by invading Ukraine. This terrible choice, will have catastrophic consequences. Some of which will not be known for weeks, months and perhaps years to come. However, the certainty is there will be consequences. There always are.

Choose your direction well is what Paul is calling us all to do.

Although poor choices may hurt you in only minor ways for a while, the longer you go, the more harm they bring.

And that is why Paul points out the importance of worthy habits -- and a worthy walk. The message from Ephesians is incredibly relevant, despite the fact the words were written nearly 2,000 years ago. The city was a huge city, and a transportation hub. The culture of Ephesus had several similarities with our culture.

Though their technology was different, their weak points were the same. They had a tendency to like behaviors that were not always healthy or helpful. They were materialistic to a point of overkill. And yet, right in the midst of a very difficult environment, a church sprang up. As Paul ministered to this small group of Christians, it became obvious that people were hungry for something real. They wanted something more than what their money could buy; and as they listened, as they considered the life of Jesus, and as they changed their ways, their number began to grow. In fact, so many people in Ephesus came to Christ and began changing their way of living, the economic core of the city was threatened.

Change so dramatic came to the town, a riot involving 25,000 or more people broke out against this new way of living, with the writer of this little letter being the focus of the fury.

(Acts 18-19 has the full story.)

We have seen how in the first three chapters of Ephesians Paul has set forth the believer's position with all the blessings, honors, and privileges of being a child of God. In the next three chapters he gives the obligations and requirements of being a son or daughter of God. He does this in order that we know how to live out our salvation in accordance with the God's will and for His glory. The first three chapters Paul put forth our identity in Christ. In these last three chapters, Paul puts forth our responsibility to Christ.

Robert Adams who found \$17,000 in cash in a bank bag beside an ATM in Chicago. At first, he thought it was a prank/joke. But no TV crews popped out to catch him. The bag had Chase on the side, so he took it to the bank, but they said it wasn't theirs. It had to belong to the company that provisioned the ATMs. Took some work to figure out but finally concluded an armored truck employee accidentally dropped the bag. When he was asked about being tempted by the money, he said, "it's not my money. I don't care if you put another zero on there, I wasn't raised to take money that isn't mine." Robert Adams didn't suddenly wake up one day and choose to have integrity. He said it himself: he wasn't raised that way.

Now, nobody likes to hear about their responsibility. We are over-burdened and overwhelmed by it in our lives already. So, the last thing any of us want is to have to deal with it in our Christian faith.

However, with privilege comes responsibility.

## I

And Paul begins by **calling** us to a more worthy way. Verse one says, "*I, Therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called.*" (4:1)

When people join a group, that obligates them to live and act in accordance with the standards of the group. They accept its aims, objectives, and standards. A citizen is obligated to abide by the laws of the country they live in. And an employee is obligated to work according to the rules, standards, and purposes of that company. Even though at times we see people not doing so. And Paul is entreating us -- which means urging with intense desire. He is urging us to accept and act on the standards of the calling on our lives. He desires us to live in our daily conduct and day to day living in a manner that is befitting a believer in Jesus.

What we believe eventually determines how we behave. If we see the world as awful and terrible, we will only see what is ugly--we will miss the beauty.

In basic training one of the first things you learn is how to make a bed. It is a little thing, but sometimes little things make a big difference. When I went to Basic Military Training, we also were taught how to make our beds and given a rule to help with that task. I never knew that you needed a ruler to make a bed. Who knew? But we did. Once you learned how to make your bed you had to do that over and over again for every inspection. I having had a father who was a WO in the military, I learned that once I made the bed and it was inspected. It was better to sleep on the floor than to get your whole section in trouble if you didn't make it right the next day.

A Navy Admiral told a University graduation class that if you want to change the world begin by making your bed. "If you make your bed every morning you will have accomplished the first task of the day. It will give you a small sense of pride, and it will encourage you to do another task and another and another. By the end of the day, that one task completed will have turned into many tasks completed. Making your bed will also reinforce the fact that little things

in life matter. If you can't do the little things right, you will never do the big things right. And, if by chance you have a miserable day, you will come home to a bed that is made — that you made — and a made bed gives you encouragement that tomorrow will be better. If you want to change the world, start off by making your bed.”

And Paul is urging us to look at our lives. He desires that we are living as people called by God to a high calling. To start to walk in a new direction--down a different path. To start a habit that is helpful not harmful.

## II

Paul begins by with the call to a more worthy way of living. He then points out **characteristics** of a more worthy way of living. , *"I, Therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called...."* He is saying, you know the truth, are you living it? Are the characteristics of that truth evident in your lives. And with that, he points out a few. He says of that calling for which you have been called *"with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (4:2-3)*

When the Rev. Donald Gardner had been newly ordained, and called to a small village church he was asked by one of the church leaders to visit one of the local matriarchs, who was not attending because of something that had happened a while earlier. The church leader told him as an aside, that she was devoted to her ancient cat, Toby.

Seeing a chance to ingratiate himself on the visit he went to the store and bought a toy for the cat to gain the affection of the cat and, he hoped the matriarch. Early in the conversation with the woman, a monster-sized old cat crawled out from under the sofa. "Oh, look, a kitty" he said, "Now, have I got something for you." He withdrew the toy and threw it high in the air, and the cat catapulted himself into the air. Upon returning to the ground, he lay there in an unexpected lifeless heap in front the lady. It was dead. After a moment of shocked silence, he asked, "Is there anything I can do for you?" "No thank you," the matriarch retorted icily. "You have done quite enough."

He said later, "It was there and then that I learned the lesson that while focusing on people's needs, I must never try to impress or appease them."

It is not always easy to do that. So sometimes all you can do is simply bear with them. Paul gives us a number of essentials for faithful Christian living. He speaks of our need for forbearance, patience, gentleness, humility -- ingredient that can lead to peace, but that should not be confused with appeasement.

When we understand our state before God--that it is by God's grace alone that our lives are not in pieces because of the cycles of sin and self-destructiveness in our lives. Our approach with others therefore, comes the place of humility before God. This understanding about ourselves gives birth to gentleness or meekness.

Now, meekness or gentleness has nothing to do with weakness. It has to do with power under control. Like a stallion that has been tamed by the horse trainer. The volcanic power within the horse remains, yet under the direction and control of the owner. A tamed lion is still powerful, but his power is under the control of the trainer.

Humility gives birth to meekness and meekness gives birth to patience--which means long-suffering, which gives way to forbearing love. Forbearing love takes abuse from others

while continuing to love them.

A young wife named Jennifer prayed like this: Lord, I pray for ... wisdom to understand my man. Lord, I pray for Love, to forgive him. O Lord, I pray for patience, to deal with his moods. But O Lord, I **do not** pray for strength, for if you give me strength, I will beat him to death, Amen.

### III

Paul points out the call and the characteristics of a more worthy way of living. And finally, he shows us the **cause** of the more worthy way of living. *"There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all."* (4-6)

Have you ever had your favorite band break up? Beatles (For you 60's music lovers) Led Zeppelin or The Who or The Eagles (For you 70's music lovers), Guns & Roses (for you 80's hair metal fans), The Police (more 80's fans) Backstreet Boys (90's boy band fans... blech) More recently - for the Millennials - One Direction/Jonas Bros.

It's discouraging and disappointing. Or much worse... and far more serious than you're favorite band breaking up, you've seen relationships come apart.

There were fault lines Ephesians is a letter to a Jesus community made up of both Jews and Gentiles. These two groups were natural enemies. Jews looked down on Gentiles. Gentiles didn't have the Law. Gentiles worshiped multiple pagan god's. Gentiles felt the Jews were un-educated backwater hicks with no sophistication Jews were a weak, conquered, complaining people who were arrogant, distasteful and largely un-likeable These two groups have come together as followers of Jesus in "one community". Which meant a necessity to get along in order to go along.

An Admirer once asked Leonard Bernstein, celebrated orchestra conductor, what was the hardest instrument to play. He replied without hesitation: "Second fiddle. I can always get plenty of first violinists, but to find one who plays second violin with as much enthusiasm or second French horn or second flute, now that's a problem. And yet if no one plays second, we have no harmony." (Source: James S. Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited, Tyndale, 1988, p. 450, Brett Blair, Sermon Illustrations, 1999.)