

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

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WALK IN A MANNER WORTHY

In Paul's epistles, there are four references to walking in a worthy manner: **walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory** (1 Thessalonians 2.12 NASB); **walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects** (Colossians 1.10 NASB); **conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ** (Philippians 1.27 NASB); **walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called** (Ephesians 4.1 NASB).

In each case, the word *worthy* is used in reference to God, the Lord, the evangel, and the calling. We only need to look at one of these verses to impress this thought on our hearts, so let us look at the first one.

You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. (1 Thessalonians 2.10-12 NASB; see 2 Thessalonians 1.5)

Paul exhorted, encouraged, and implored this young ecclesia as a father would his children, with one purpose; he desired that they would walk in a manner that is worthy of God.

I have often thought that we have to walk in a worthy manner, that is, our deportment or behavior has to be such that it makes us worthy of God, our Lord, the evangel, and the calling. In other words, we are to have worthy behavior, as if this is necessary for us to deserve or merit our ultimate destiny. Another way to state this is that if you want to enter the kingdom, you must do what is needed to deserve this privilege. As I began to write on this matter, I was actually writing in this vein until I began to see that this is not what Paul meant in the verses under examination. Consequently, I was adjusted in my understanding. According to Paul, we are to have good behavior because God deserves it from us. We do not do it for our sake but for God's sake.

In other words, the emphasis is on the God who calls, not on the ones being called. The worth is for God. Another way of stating this thought is: **God deserves the best out of you, so give Him the best in your daily walk.** He is calling you into His kingdom and glory, and He deserves your best behavior while you walk through life waiting to be delivered into His kingdom and glory, which is the kingdom of Christ that will be manifested in the eons to come.

It is a matter of the heart and a reflection of the lavish grace that He has bestowed upon us in His Son.

Dear brethren, grace will see us through to the end if we remain under His grace, walking in a worthy manner. Under grace, we do not have to fear that we will be left out or that we will not make it into the kingdom and glory in the next eon. Our Lord will see us through to His presence by His grace, for He loves and nourishes His body (Ephesians 5.29-30). But once we see this, should it not cause us to overflow with so much gratitude and love for our God and our Lord that we willingly desire to please Him in whatever way that we can? Shouldn't it lead us to yield to His marvelous life and bring delight to His heart, to please Him in all respects?

Do you realize that if you believe in Jesus and His finished work, you are being called into royalty? This is what it means to be invited or called into the kingdom of God. You are being called into the royalty of God. Royalty implies a quality of character and action.

Consider some of the more noble kingdoms of the nations of the earth that are led by royal monarchies. The members of the royal family are expected to live a certain way, to project themselves to the subjects of their kingdom. There is much pomp and circumstance (ceremony) surrounding the king and queen of a monarchy, and their children are reared in this atmosphere and are expected to walk in a manner that reflects the character of the monarchy. In fact, the children born into the monarchy are reared at a very young age in the way in which they are to behave and present themselves to the subjects of the kingdom. They are not allowed to behave in a manner that would reflect badly on the character of the king and queen. They have been born into great privilege that most of the subjects of the kingdom have not been called into, so more is demanded of them. Even as very young children, they are to be a reflection of the royalty into which they have been born. Further, in many monarchies, the firstborn son is given special honor because he is destined to ascend the throne one day to take the scepter of his father's kingdom.

In like fashion, spiritually speaking, we too have been born into royalty. We are children of God who need to grow up to be sons of the kingdom; sons that one day will ascend the throne of the kingdom of God to reign with Christ. We need to be a reflection of the royal spirit dwelling within us, projecting the very character of our King and His kingdom. Our walk must be deserving of our God who calls us into His royalty. To whom much has been given much is required (Luke 12.48).

But there is a warning for us. The royal life of the children of God is a life that walks according to the royal law of love. Although we are privileged, we are not to abuse this privilege by looking down upon others. As James wrote: **My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism** (James 2.1 NASB). We are under grace as long as we apply the royal law of love, but if we turn from this love, we become transgressors of this law and are no longer under grace. **If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF," you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors** (James 2.8-9 NASB). This does not mean that our immortality is in danger, but it does mean that we will face the judgment of God for our actions if we do not confess them and turn from them (repent).

However, walking in a manner worthy is a matter of the heart and not of legality, as if we have to do specific works to earn our way into the kingdom. We see that, spiritually, we are in the kingdom and we are to walk in a way that is deserving or worthy of our God who calls us into His kingdom. The emphasis shifts from us to God, from mere works to expressions of love, from our head to our heart. If we see this and do it, we do not have to fear, for **there is no fear in love** (1 John 4.18).

We must not lose sight of the fact that it is not doing a list of right things; it is a matter of the motive of our heart. Through Solomon, we are reminded: **All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, but the Lord weighs the motives** (Proverbs 16.2 NASB). **Every man's way is right in his own sight, but the Lord weighs the heart** (Proverbs 21.2 NASB).

Out of a deep love and gratitude to God our Father and His Son, Christ Jesus, our Lord, our deportment should reflect how deserving they are. They are worthy, for they have purposed in the oncoming eon to bring us into the kingdom and glory; and so they shall, if we endure in this day, walking in a manner to please Him. How do we please our God and our Lord?

Walk in love!