

I. Introduction

- A. Last month I became a football coach, for the first time in my life. I am an assistant coach for the UPrep Jr. Pee-Wee Panthers. Gary Warner is our head coach and he is awesome. He knows a whole lot about football, and is incredibly patient with the boys.
- B. I know a whole lot about snapping football helmets on kids and yelling at them when they grab each other's facemasks.
- C. We have great kids on our team, though most of them don't have much football experience. A lot of them come from single-parent families—and I'm not here to criticize anybody, because a lot of single parents do a heroic job with their kids—but it is easy to see how some of the boys really miss having a dad at home.
- D. One of our best players is a really good kid, and I'm going to change his name to Jimmy. Jimmy can block, he can tackle, he can run, and he gets what he's supposed to do on complicated plays.
- E. But one day, Jimmy was having a really bad day. He was out of his normal gung-ho character. In our league, before every game, every boy is weighed: they have to be between 50 pounds and 95 pounds, or they can't play.
- F. The weigh in has to go fast, so we try to keep the players in line, quiet, and under control. Jimmy, who was having a bad day, was being a pain in the butt for weigh in. After about the third time he smarted off to me, I got down close to Jimmy's face, and spoke really low so no one else could hear.
- G. I said, "Jimmy, I think you're great. All the coaches think you're great. You play hard, you listen, you cooperate, and you're a really good player, and a really good kid. So I expect a lot from you. What you're doing right now isn't your best. And even though I think you're great, I'm really disappointed in your behavior right now. I expect better from you."
- H. Well, I stood up and backed away a few steps. Jimmy's face got really long, and he got really quiet. And we finished our weigh in.
- I. Later, when the rush of weighing-in was over, I went and found Jimmy and made him do a bunch of extra push ups.
- J. We'll come back to Jimmy, but let's look at our core Bible passage for today.

II. Scripture

- A. *I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called (Ephesians 4:1, NKJV).*
- B. The writer is a man named Paul.
- C. The book is a letter Paul wrote. He wrote it to Christians in the city called Ephesus. He wrote it to real people with real jobs, or lack of jobs, and marriages, and children, and all the same problems that we have today, only without the Internet.
- D. Paul's letter to the Ephesians is simply called Ephesians. Over the last year, we have woven our way in and out of this book in a series called ALLIES. Today's message is sermon number nine in that series.
- E. In this message, the book of Ephesians turns a corner. The first three chapters focused on OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST: who we are now that we belong to Jesus. Or, as today's verse puts it, *"the calling with which you have been called."*
- F. In other words, for three chapters, Paul has tried to convince you that you have a very high calling in Christ.
- G. When you received Jesus, you received a new name, a new nature, a new identity, a new history, a new destiny, and a new potentiality.
- H. You have certain doors open to you that were never opened to you before you had Jesus.
- I. You have the potential to be an amazing person who lives an amazing life because of the supernatural life of Christ that now flows in you and through you.
 - 1. WHO YOU ARE is exalted.
 - 2. Who you are is perfect in the eyes of God.
 - 3. Who you are is able to do all things through Christ.
 - 4. Who you are is gifted for incredible works of service.
 - 5. Who you are is holy and acceptable to God.
 - 6. Who you are is perfect, right now, today.
 - 7. Who you are is royal, and regal, and dignified, and glorious.
- J. Who you are is truly amazing, so much so that if the veil that shrouds your true glory could be lifted away for even a moment, and if the real you as a glorious child of God could shine through, we would all be tempted to bow down and worship you. You'd be that glorious. C.S. Lewis said that even the angels would be tempted to bow down and worship you.
- K. You bear in your being the imprint of the very identity and royal titles of the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.
- L. That's the calling with which you have been called. That's who you are.
- M. Now, how you live might be an entirely different matter.
- N. See there in that verse the word "walk." He says, *"I beseech you to walk..."* I urge you, exhort you, encourage you, and beg you to walk in a certain way.

- O. To walk means to pattern your life.
 - 1. Walking refers to how you act at work, and how you pay your employees, and how you turn in an honest day's work for an honest day's pay.
 - 2. Walking refers to how you speak to your wife, or husband, or ex. How you treat your kids. How you spend your money. How you spend time with God in the Bible and prayer.
 - 3. Walking refers to sex, and speech, and relationships, and purpose, and mission, and every single aspect of your life.
 - a) When Paul talks about walking, he's talking about the entire conduct of your life.
 - (1) And what does he say about it?
- P. He says to walk worthy.
- Q. If something can be WORTHY, that also means it can be the opposite of WORTHY too, right? If it should be worthy but it isn't worthy, what does that make it? UNWORTHY.

III. Are you UNWORTHY?

- A. Does that mean that some Christians are UNWORTHY? No. That's not what he's saying at all.
- B. Remember, there's a difference between who you are and how you live.
- C. WHO YOU ARE in Christ is ALWAYS WORTHY. How do we know that? Check it out:
 - 1. *Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light (Colossians 1:12, NKJV).*
- D. Who qualified you? The Father qualified you.
- E. Did you qualify yourself? No. The Father qualified you.
- F. The Greek word for qualified means: to make sufficient, or to enable, or to make someone good enough or worthy.
- G. Your worthiness comes from your position in Christ, not from your walk.
- H. Your worthiness depends on one thing and one thing only: do you have Jesus Christ as your Savior or not. Have you been placed into permanent union with Christ through salvation or not? Are you born again or not? Because if your answer is YES, then God has made you worthy to partake of every blessing and every good thing He has ever planned for your life. He has made you worthy once and for all.
- I. You are worthy.
- J. But your ACTIONS might be UNWORTHY, and that is what this verse is about.
- K. When I got down in Jimmy's face, and I told him YOU are great, but your ACTIONS are disappointing, that's the distinction I was making.
- L. Live up to who you are.
- M. Live up to your true identity in Christ.
- N. The whole talk of discipleship is summed up in this:
 - 1. Equipping you to live the life God called you to live.
 - a) Does your lifestyle live up to that life? Jesus said He came that we might have an abundant life (Jn. 10:10).
 - b) Does your practice live up to your position?
 - c) Does your state live up to your standing?
- O. Jesus did not shed His blood and die on the Cross, He did not redeem you and adopt you into His family, and He did not come to live inside you, so that you could be a mediocre Christian.
- P. Todd Skinner preached about SUCCESS last week. I think this verse defines success for a Christian.
 - 1. *I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called (Ephesians 4:1, NKJV).*
- Q. That's success.
 - 1. Does that verse say anything about how much money you have when you die?
 - 2. How muscular or physically fit you are?
 - 3. How pretty your wife is?
 - 4. Whether or not your kids go to great colleges?
 - 5. Anything in there about being a celebrity, or a published author, or a preacher?
- R. No. It's simple. Walk worthy of the high calling of Jesus Christ.

IV. Last Time

- A. Last time, in chapter three, we looked at a topic called Standing and State.
- B. Same thing is in play here.
 - 1. Your standing is how God sees you. If you are saved, then God sees you as perfect. That's because He has so immersed you into Jesus Christ, that in His eyes, you have all the goodness of Jesus. That is your STANDING before the throne of God.
 - 2. Your state is how we all see you. Your everyday life. Your lifestyle.
- C. This verse means that every Christian has the same goal: to make your state live up to your standing.

- D. I thought it would be good to put all this on a graph, so we can visualize it—and to outline three kinds of Christians.
- V. Three Kinds of Christians
- A. Let's start with our graph. The vertical axis represents the gold standard of your life as a follower of Jesus. What is the standard? It is "Likeness to Christ." God is at work conforming you to the image of Christ. That means you will be a lot like Jesus in your reactions to people, and in how you handle tough times.
 - B. Likeness to Jesus.
 - C. When you receive Jesus as your Savior, guess what? God made you just like Christ. He gave you a standing that is equal to the standing of Jesus Christ. We studied this in the first half of Ephesians: God so joined you to Christ at the moment of salvation that everything that is true of Jesus Christ is now true of you.
 - D. Your standing is perfect. Your standing doesn't fluctuate. Your standing is eternal. Your standing in Christ should give you confidence that when you stand before God at the last day, you are worthy—through Christ alone—to enter God's presence. That is your standing.
- VI. The Carnal Christian
- A. Now, let's add your daily life onto the graph, called your state.
 - B. In this case, the state isn't that good. A lot of ups and downs, but you never really get anywhere close to walking worthy of your high calling. It's like you have a low grade spiritual fever all your life.
 - C. We are going to give this profile a name: The Carnal Christian.
 1. *3 For you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men (1 Corinthians 3:3, NKJV)?*
 2. *14 That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting (Ephesians 4:14, NKJV).*
 - D. There are some of you here today, you have received Jesus as your Savior, but you have failed to launch. You are dominated by your flesh, by your inner mess, and the Bible calls you carnal.
 - E. Your life will be FRUSTRATING. You will not experience the God-blessed life—and you will not walk worthy of your calling until you choose to break this cycle of immaturity and carnality.
 - F. I pray that you make that choice.
 - G. We have a whole church here, cheering you on to make that choice.
- VII. The Backsliding Christian
- A. Here's a second profile: You started well, you grew up, you grew in holiness and love and maturity—and then something happened, and now, you're just steady-state mediocre.
 - B. What happened?
 - C. We'll call this profile "The Backsliding Christian."
 - D. Here's how you know if you're a backsliding Christian by answering a simple question: Can you look at your past and remember a day when you were more on fire for Jesus than today? That is the test.
 - E. The Bible describes the backsliding Christian this way:
 1. *7 My people are bent on backsliding from Me. Though they call to the Most High, none at all exalt Him (Hosea 11:7, NKJV).*
 2. *28 And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming (1 John 2:28, NKJV).*
 - a) You are a worthy person walking in an unworthy manner, and that will make you crazy.
 3. *4 "I will heal their backsliding; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned away from Him" (Hosea 14:4, NKJV).*
 - F. Maybe you fit this profile. Maybe you're a bit chagrined by that, or maybe not.
 - G. There's good news and there's bad news.
 - H. The good news is that God still loves you, and He sees you as perfect in Christ Jesus.
 - I. The good news is also that you're here, and you have the power to change the trajectory of your life with Christ. You have the power to walk worthy of your high calling.
 - J. The bad news is that if you don't stage a comeback, your life will be frustrating, and you will not live the God-blessed life of your dreams.
 - K. We are all together cheering that you will make the choice to turn things around today.
- VIII. The Growing Christian
- A. Here's the last profile I'll put up today. Your standing is just like every other Christian's standing: perfect.
 - B. In this case, your state has moved up over time. Not perfectly. Not in a straight line. You have ups and downs. But the trend is right and your heart is right and your desire is there.
 - C. This is a GROWING Christian, and this is all we can ask or pray for and strive to be, by God's grace. You are not perfect, but you are growing. You are not always like Jesus, but you are growing.
 1. *18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen (2 Peter 3:18, NKJV).*
 2. *13 Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13, NKJV).*

- D. This is what our verse is talking about. It's talking about a growing likeness to Jesus in how you speak, think, and live.
- E. If this is your profile, guess what? Your life will have just as many frustrations as the other profiles, **BUT IT WON'T FEEL THE SAME.**
 - 1. You will feel strength when you are weak.
 - 2. You will feel hope when all seems lost.
 - 3. You will feel peace in the fiercest storm.
 - 4. And you will feel love though you stand alone.
- F. This is the victorious Christian life. This is the higher life, the better life, the life God designed you for, and the life you know is waiting for you—if only by grace you will go and get it.
- G. Is that something you want?
- H. Do you want to stay a spiritual kindergarten all your life?
- I. Do you want to backslide and be mediocre all your life?
- J. Or do you want to let people see Jesus through you?
 - 1. I think I need to add one more:

IX. The Not Yet Christian

- A. Here is a person whose **STANDING** is at **ZERO**. That is how God sees a person who has never embraced Jesus Christ, and responded to Him as Savior.
- B. How you live can be anything—high or low. Your state can be great, or lousy. You can be really loving like Jesus, or really sinning unlike Jesus. It makes no difference.
- C. Until you are saved, your state is still zero, and you can't fix that by your behavior.
 - 1. *12 "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12, NKJV).*

X. Two more things...

- A. Today, I haven't really talked at all about **HOW** to live up to your calling. I want you to know that I know that. Don't be frustrated—because as we press through Ephesians—even into next year—we'll put it all out there.
- B. The last thing is this: everything we have from God is completely dependent on the Cross of Jesus Christ. That means that what Jesus did on the Cross makes every good gift possible in your life.
- C. The only reason you have standing with God is because a Savior loved you enough to shed His precious blood, and die on the Cross. He did that to reconcile you to God—to end the struggle once and for all between you and God. Jesus did that all by Himself, all by His own effort, without any help from you.
- D. His crucifixion was a free gift of love to the world of sinful humans.
- E. Because He died, and because He rose again, you can have a standing with God that is perfect, and permanent, and assured, and once for all.
- F. That's how we receive our standing—by grace alone through faith alone on the basis of the Jesus Christ the Crucified One.
- G. But I want you to know something really important.
- H. Making your state match your standing is by grace alone too. Jesus died to give you life.
- I. Then He came inside you to re-live His life through you again.
- J. It is His power and His grace all the way.
- K. So here's my question:
 - 1. Carnal Christian
 - 2. Backslidden Christian
 - 3. Growing Christian
 - 4. Not-Yet Christian.
- L. Which profile best fits your past?
- M. Which profile do you want for your future?
- N. Let's tell God right now.