

## “A Sketch of a Worthy Way of Life” Ephesians 4:2-3

### *Introduction:*

1. My lack of the artistic skills of drawing and painting is legendary. It is about all I can do to make my stick figures look like stick figures! However, my wife and at least two of my children have some much of such talent. I know that often an artist begins a painting by sketching out what he or she wants to represent in the work of art. The sketch enables the artist to take visual notes of the idea of the painting. Then the artist works hard to make that idea come to life.

2. That is something like what Paul is doing in Eph 4:1-3. He quickly presents the New Testament concept of sanctification in 4:1, and then he jots down a couple notes of the essence of the Christian walk. This sketch should not be passed over, but I fear it is usually neglected—to the detriment of the church. You see, one of our great problems is attitude. Here many commit an error that complicates church life. Many think that a person with a bad attitude is someone out of sorts because of some mitigating circumstance. “Oh, that is just how he/she is.” However, a poor attitude does just not develop from our preconception baggage. It also flows from our doctrine. Let me explain what I mean.

3. Last week we examined the New Testament way of teaching sanctification or growth in grace. We call it “Therefore Christianity”. Here is what you are in Christ; therefore, live that way.

[1] Now if we substitute something else for Christ as our source, means and test of spirituality, it will affect our attitude toward one another.

- A “rules” person will usually be judgmental of those who do not measure up to their rules, regulations, convictions or code of conduct.
- An “experience” person will usually look down on those who do not profess to share the “in the group” experience.
- A “church” person will usually become frustrated with those who do not attend enough “club meetings”.
- A “Christian service” person will usually evaluate those not serving as “dead” or perhaps as “frozen”.

*Comment:* The only cure for such folk is to heal them from the inside out. In other words, the truth of Christ and his grace must lay hold of their emotions.

[2] In place of these perversions, we want to restore the Lord Jesus Christ to his proper place as the focus of our thinking and way of life. So then we ask, “What kind of life did our Lord live?” Paul kindly sketches his way of life in 4:2-3. It is not the entire picture. He will fill it out in the rest of the letter.

*Comment:* If I may indulge in a little “pastoral thunder”, most Christians have little idea what the Christian life truly is because well-meaning Christians have given them big doses of one of the four perversions. They are “spiritual drag queens” walking around in the dress of what is not truly Christian.

*Exposition:* Three of five defining qualities of a true Christian lifestyle

### I. The quality of **humility**

#### A. Meaning of humility

1. It is a lowliness of mind; that is, it is a way of thinking about ourselves.

2. The humble person has the quality of not exalting himself over others (Ph 2:3).

3. Humility is an active quality. We must be humble. 1 Pt 5:6; Js 4:10

B. The practice of humility

1. Since we are in Christ, we should learn how to be humble from following his example. Mt 11:29; Ph 2:8

2. “Now humility is essential to unity. Pride lurks behind all discord, while the greatest single secret of concord is humility. It is not difficult to prove this in experience.” [Stott]

## II. The quality of **gentleness**

A. Meaning of gentleness

1. To be gentle in the Biblical meaning of the term is to be non-self-assertive. It is not a synonym for weakness, but for one whose strength is under control. It “is ‘the absence of the disposition to assert personal rights, either in the presence of God or of men.’” [Stott, quoting Findlay]

2. Gentleness “is a quality shown by friends, while stern harshness may be expected from an enemy... [It is] opposed to unbridled anger, harshness, brutality and self-expression.” [DNTT, Vol. 2, p. 256.]

B. The practice of gentleness

1. The Holy Spirit produces gentleness (Gal 5:23) in us as we learn what Christ is like. See 1 Pt 2:21-23.

2. The Holy Spirit produces gentleness as he leads us toward a Biblical self-image. He leads us to...

- ❑ Recognize that we are people who are responsible to serve the living God as he has commanded. 1 Th 1:9
- ❑ Knowledge of our sinful condition. Each of us must struggle with remaining sin, which will seek to reassert its dominion in our lives. 1 Pt 2:11
- ❑ Acknowledge our inability to live for God apart from his assistance. Jn 15:4-5
- ❑ A sense of our obligation to live under the lordship of Jesus Christ. Rm 6:13,19; 1 Cor 6:19-20
- ❑ Faith in God’s sovereign purpose (Rm 8:28-30). The situation we are in is part of God’s plan to conform us more to Christ’s likeness.
- ❑ An awareness of God’s provision for the work he has called us to do. Rm 15:14; Eph 1:18-19; 2 Pt 1:3-4
- ❑ A self-image based on the position we have in Christ by the grace of God. Eph 1:3-6

*Apply:* As we by faith lay hold of these truths, we will feel less need to prove to others or ourselves “who we are”, since we by faith are then confident of what we are in Christ. We will then be able to keep develop a spirit of unity without being “paranoid”.

*Action Step:* On your own, use the above “check list” in self-examination re gentleness.

## III. The quality of **patience**

A. The meaning of patience

1. Patience is the ability to wait calmly. The mind, knowing the importance of long-term goals, holds the emotions in check before it gives room to action or an emotional display. Js 5:7-8,10

2. Patience is often used to describe God in his dealings with people (Rm 2:4; 9:22; 1 Pt 3:20; 2 Pt 3:9,15).

B. The practice of patience

1. Patience is learned as we understand how the Lord Christ has dealt with us (1 Tm 1:15-16). It, too, is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22).

2. This quality is essential in maintaining unity. We cannot hold together unless we wait calmly for one another.

- We must have patience in regard to doctrine. Very rarely will an entire local church arrive at an understanding of any particular teaching at the same time. Those who see a doctrine first must be willing to wait calmly until God reveals that truth to others. Those who do not yet see it must be willing to wait to see whether “these things are so”.
- We must be patient with one another’s lives. Each believer matures at a different rate and in different areas. We must wait on the Lord to change one another. We must have confidence in the work of the Holy Spirit in another’s life. (This is not meant to deny our duty to admonish one another.)

*Action Step:* How are you doing in the practice of patience?