

WEEK 4

“One Body, Many Callings”

Ephesians 4:1 – 16

Therefore

Ephesians 4:1 (NIV)

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

In the original Greek, this passage begins with the word “therefore” and it’s doing a lot of work. In Paul’s writing, “therefore” is never a throwaway transition. It’s a hinge. It means: everything I’m about to say flows directly from everything I’ve just said. You can’t understand the second half of Ephesians without the first.

And the first half has been telling you who you are. Chosen before the world began. Made alive when you were dead. Adopted as a full heir. Redeemed. Sealed. Brought near. Built together as God’s dwelling. Rooted and grounded in love. That’s three chapters of identity before a single ethical instruction appears.

Now Paul says: therefore, live a life worthy of that.

Notice he doesn’t say “live a life that earns that.” He says live a life worthy of it. There’s a difference. Worthy means proportionate to. Matching. Consistent with. He’s not asking you to achieve something new. He’s asking you to live in a way that matches what is already true about you.

This is a completely different starting point than trying to become a better person through sheer effort. Better-person-through-effort starts with a deficit and tries to close the gap. Living worthy of your calling starts with the reality of who you already are and asks your behavior to catch up.

The whole practical section of Ephesians — the humility, the community, the gifts, the household stuff, the armor — is built on this single word. Therefore. Because of who you are. Because of what has been done for you. Because grace came first.

Live accordingly.

Personal Response

- What is the calling Paul says you’ve received? In your own words, summarize what the first three chapters of Ephesians say about who you are.
- Where is there the biggest gap between who Paul says you are and how you actually live day to day? Name it specifically.
- Ask God to help you live today from who you are rather than toward who you’re trying to become. Ask him to make “therefore” more than a word.

Bear With One Another

Ephesians 4:2-3 (NIV)

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Paul lists five qualities in these two verses: humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another, and making every effort for peace. Together they describe the posture of someone who has genuinely been grounded in the identity Paul spent three chapters establishing. These aren't the traits of someone trying to be a nicer person. They're the fruit of someone who is no longer primarily worried about themselves.

The phrase that tends to get passed over is "bearing with one another." It's easy to read it as passive — just put up with difficult people. But the Greek word Paul uses carries the idea of actively carrying a weight. Bearing with someone isn't tolerating them. It's choosing to carry the burden of the relationship even when it costs you something.

Think about who in your life requires the most bearing with. The person who drains your patience. The one who disappoints you regularly. The relationship that costs more than it seems to give back. Paul is saying: that relationship is exactly where this verse is meant to live.

And notice the motivation he gives: "in love." Not in obligation. Not in gritted-teeth endurance. In love. The bearing with is meant to come from the same source as everything else in Ephesians — the love that chose you before you had anything to offer, that made you alive when you were dead, that is rooted and grounded in Christ. That love doesn't just receive. It bears.

Nobody who has been truly loved well finds it easy to love difficult people. But everyone who has been truly loved well has a reason to try.

Personal Response

- Who in your life do you currently need to "bear with"? Name them specifically rather than keeping it general.
- What does bearing with that person actually look like in practice this week? What would it cost you, and what would it give them?
- Ask God to fill in the gap between the love you can manufacture and the love this person actually needs. Tell him honestly how hard this is.

Your Part

Ephesians 4:15-16 (NIV)

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Every supporting ligament. Each part. Paul's image of the body is remarkably specific. It's not just the obvious, visible parts that matter. It's the ligaments — the connective tissue that most people never think about until it's damaged and suddenly nothing works the way it should.

You have probably never woken up grateful for your ligaments. You don't notice them. They don't get celebrated. Nobody writes songs about connective tissue. But tear one and you'll immediately discover how essential the invisible, uncelebrated parts of the body actually are.

Paul says the body of Christ works the same way. The people who show up quietly week after week and do the unglamorous work of community are not less important than the people on stage or in visible leadership. They are the ligaments. And without them, the body doesn't function. It can't.

The phrase that carries the most weight here is "as each part does its work." Not as a few talented parts do their work while everyone else watches. Each part. The growth of the body — toward maturity, toward the fullness of Christ — depends on each person contributing what they've been given.

Which raises the honest question for each of us: are you doing your part? Not someone else's part. Not the part you wish you had. The part you actually have. The contribution that is specifically yours to make — in your group, in your family, in your workplace, in your neighborhood. When you hold it back, the body is poorer for it. When you offer it, the whole thing grows.

Personal Response

- What is your part? If you're not sure, write down what other people have told you that you contribute — even informally. What do people come to you for?
- Is there a place where you've been holding your part back — waiting to feel ready, waiting to be asked, waiting until conditions are right? Name it.
- Ask God to show you one specific way to do your part today. Not someday. Today.