

One of the songs I learned in Sunday School was called, “I live for Jesus.” The words go, “I live for Jesus, day after day; I live for Jesus, let come what may, the Holy Spirit, I will obey, I live for Jesus, day after day.” In the epistle reading for today, Paul is encouraging us to live for Jesus. Paul wrote, “As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.” The New King James Version puts it this way, “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, I beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.”

Sometimes Paul used words like “fight,” or “run,” to describe our relationship with God. The New King James Version used the word, “walk.” Walk is a good word because it reminds us that we are not in a rush. When we run, we are in a hurry and can miss some things. When we fight, we are focused on the enemy in front of us. When we walk, we get involved in a conversation and pay attention to the person we are walking with. One of the ways God wants to be in relationship with us is for us to live for Him. When we live for Jesus, we walk with him, we work for him, we worship him, and we belong to him. The NIV translation is a good one. It reads, “As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.” There are different ways to live for Jesus. In this passage, Paul gives us some ways we can live for Jesus.

In living for Jesus, Paul wants us to first **walk in unity and community**. Verses 2-6 tell us, “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called;⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism;⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

There are more than 99 references in the Bible about walking with God. Walking with God is a sign of Fellowship, friendship, obedience, commitment, dedication, and more. When we participate in worship, we walk with God. When we pray, we walk with God. When we gather with other believers to study the Bible, that is walking with God. When we work together, we are walking with God.

Walking with God means enjoying a healthy relationship with God. Adam and Eve walked with God until they disobeyed God then they tried to hide from God. Abraham and Sarah walked with God in faith and obedience. Although Sarah laughed when God told her she would have a child in her old age,

she kept the faith and never stopped believing. Moses walked with God. Joshua Walked with God. Ruth walked with God. Hannah walked with God. Paul the Apostle walked with God. You can read about his walk with God in the book of Acts from chapter 9 to chapter 28. In this letter to the Ephesians, Paul is writing to encourage them in their Christian walk with God and how to go about it. As a Church, we must walk with God with unity in community.

There is a popular story about an old man who had several sons. These boys were always clashing, fighting and in conflict with one another. The old man had tried, without result, encouraged them to live together in harmony. One day he called them together, and he gathered a bundle of sticks and tied them together and asked each one of them to try to break them. Each one tried as hard as they could but none of them could break the bundle of sticks. Then the father cut the cord that he tied them together with and told his sons to break them separately. Each boy broke the stick easily. “See, my sons,” the old man said. “This is the power of unity!” Tied together by brotherly love, you can face almost every kind of danger, but divided, you will be easily defeated by your enemies.

The church is like that. We are the Body of Christ, united in love and living as a community. As members of the Body of Christ, we do not live for ourselves. We live for Christ and for each other. In Galatians 2:20 Paul wrote, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” When one person in the community of faith celebrates some, we all share their joy, and whatever hurts one person hurts all of us.

We must live for Christ. We can live for Christ by walking together in unity and community. **Second, we must live for Christ by working together with ability and dexterity.** Verses 7-13 tell us, But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.⁸ This is why it says:

“When he ascended on high,

he took many captives

and gave gifts to his people.”

⁹ (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? ¹⁰ He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) ¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the

Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

Every believer and follower of Christ is gifted. We all have talents, gifts, and abilities. Some Christians say there’s a difference between gifts and talents. Both gifts and talents come from God. Spiritual gifts are things like praying, welcoming others, encouraging others, generosity, discernment, and leadership in the church. These spiritual gifts we do not have to learn because they are natural, and we learn them easily. Talents are abilities we have developed by training such as music, or the ability to fix things. There are people who enjoy fixing things like cars and other things around the house. They are talented. They are skillful and they can fix anything in a short period of time.

I gave an example one time about how a local church wanted to renovate a building nearby. When it was time to tear some parts of the building down, everybody came, but when it came time to renovate and fix the new building, not everybody was invited. Only those with talents to construct and take instructions were invited. Anybody can tear down, but not everybody can build. We all have gifts and talents. We must live for Christ by working for him. We must identify the spiritual gifts we have and the special talents we have been blessed with. We must use these gifts and talents to build up the Body of Christ, which is the church. Our spiritual gifts and special talents must be used to educate others in Sunday School and Bible study, to instruct others in the Christian Walk of life, and help others improve their faith.

Paul is inviting us to live for Jesus. We can live for Jesus by walking with him in unity and community. We can also live for Jesus by working for him with our ability in dexterity. **Third, we can live for Christ by worshipping in maturity and integrity.** In verses 14-16 we read, “Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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.”

A Christian philosopher once said, “It is not what we read but what we remember that shows we have learned. It is not what we preach but what we practice that makes us Christians.” This is true. Worship is not what we do on Sunday. Worship is the way we live. Christian maturity and integrity are signs

of our devotion and dedication to Christ. Christian maturity is not about how long we have been following Jesus, it is about our willingness to obey Christ and live out his teachings, no matter where we are. We show our Christian maturity and integrity in obedience to Christ.

I heard of a man who loved lifting weights to build his muscles. He lifted weights and built muscles all over his body. One day he was invited to a television show. The host of the TV show asked him, “Why do you have those muscles? What do you use them for?” The muscle-builder could only flex his muscles but could not tell the TV host why he developed those muscles and what they were used for.

Some Christians are like that muscle-builder. They get involved with spiritual exercises like Bible study, prayer, reading Christian books, listening to Christian radio and other programs, but they never apply them. Those spiritual exercises are supposed to strengthen our ability to build God’s kingdom, not simply to improve our looks for people to admire us. We build spiritual muscles for a reason, and that is to apply them to life. An American writer said, as people get older, they should grow up. This is what it means to worship in Christian maturity and integrity.

As children, it is possible we heard and learned the song in Sunday School: “I live for Jesus, day after day. I live for Jesus, let come what may. The Holy Spirit, I will obey, I live for Jesus, day after day.” If you sang this song as children, the time has come for us to live it in our lives. This is one of the messages in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. Paul opens chapter 4 in his letter to the Ephesians by saying, “As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.”

We must live for Jesus each day. In today’s reading, Paul is teaching us **we can live for Jesus by walking in unity and community, by working with our ability in dexterity, and by worshipping with maturity and integrity.** The Holy Spirit will help us. May God bless us all. Amen.