

One of the characters of the late comedian, George Carlin, was the Hippy, Dippy Weatherman, with his forecast for the night – saying: “tonight’s forecast is dark, followed by mostly dark.”

As we look at events in our State, our nation and around the world, things look pretty dark indeed. There is the economy, the high taxes, the lack of morality, the President spending 3 million taxpayer dollars in order to try to bring the Olympics to Chicago, wars, nuclear proliferation, tension in the Middle East, natural disasters ... and I could go on and on.

Some of these things – such as the economy and taxes – affect us, and some do not. And with all that is happening the Christian might be tempted to throw up his or her arms in resignation and live our lives by the motto – eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die.

But, while these things should concern us all, we know that God is in control, and as Christians we are still to live our lives in the light of God’s revealed Word – the Holy Bible.

That is exactly what the Apostle Paul teaches us in our Epistle lesson from this morning, so I ask that you turn with me to Ephesians 4:1-6 (READ), which I would like to read again.

We see immediately that Paul identify’s himself – “*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord ...*” Paul was a prisoner of the Lord – he was jailed because of his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. It is believed that he was under house arrest in Rome between 62-64 AD, as recorded for us in Acts 28. It is during this time that he writes this letter to the Church at Ephesus.

Notice first of all that in spite of his circumstances there is not hint at feeling sorry for himself, giving up or a sign of resignation. In fact, we find as we compare other passages, we find that Paul rejoiced that he was able to be in chains for the sake of the Gospel.

Now, again, we see the word therefore – and again, at the risk of repeating myself – we ask, what is the therefore there for?

Paul is referring to all that he has said previously in his letter – in what we know as the first three chapters of the book of Ephesians. Generally, what we see in those first three chapters are the blessings and truths from God that concerns us as Christians – that is, all that God has done for us and given us through the Lord Jesus Christ.

For example we read these powerful words in Ephesians 1:3-5: “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,*”

He tells the Christians in Ephesus and, remember also us, that it is God who has chosen us ... it is God who has adopted us into His family. Our salvation is a gift from God as he tells them in Ephesians 2:8-9: “*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*”

He goes on to tell us what this salvation means in Ephesians 1:7-9: “*In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,*” We have redemption, we have the forgiveness of sins and we have God revealing Himself to us – again, the blessings of our salvation.

As he continues in chapter two, he tells in Ephesians 2:1: “*And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,*” We who were once dead in our sins, are now alive in Christ Jesus.

He then tells us that we have peace with God – Ephesians 2:14 and that through the Holy Spirit we have access to the Father – Ephesians 2:18.

And then there are those precious words in Ephesians 2:19: “*Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,*” We are part of the family of God – What a blessing!

He tells them many other great and precious truths that God has given us as Christians – but the result of it all is that we are then to do certain things. Remember that salvation is a gift from God – but as he told us, that while our salvation is not of works, we have been chosen for good works as we read in Ephesians 2:10: “*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*”

And that is exactly what Paul tells us as he continues his letter in chapter 4 – “*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.*”

As a result of all that God has done for us and all that He has given us, we are then to “walk worthy” of our special calling – we are to walk in the light of the fact that God has chosen us, forgiven us, revealed Himself to us and all the other blessings of our salvation.

God has called us to Himself. He has revealed Himself to us. It is not by anything that we have done – He has done it all. But as a result, He then expects to live a certain way – in light of what He has revealed in the Scriptures. Living as He wants us to does not add to our salvation, but rather is an evidence of our salvation.

In verses 2 & 3, he tells us partially what this worthy walk entails – “*with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*”

What he states are characteristics that the Christian is to have in his life as he walks on this earth – and we would note that these are not characteristics highly esteemed by the world.

Our worthy walk is to be *with all lowliness* – that is, we are to be humble individuals. We are not to be proud and boastful. Again, this is nothing new. This is a constant theme throughout the Scriptures.

Proverbs 15:25 says: “*The Lord will destroy the house of the proud ...*” Psalm 101:5 says: “*The one who has a haughty look and a proud heart, Him I will not endure.*” James quotes Proverbs 3:34, by saying in James 4:6: “*Therefore He says: “God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.”* And in 1 Peter 5:5, he quotes the same verse and then goes on to say in 1 Peter 5:6,7: “*Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.*”

This is part of the way that we should walk worthy as Christians. But Paul doesn't stop there as he continues: *with all lowliness and gentleness*. The original KJV says "meekness" – which is not to be confused with weakness. Again, this is nothing new. We should be reminded of the words of our Savior in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:5: "*Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.*"

Being meek concerns how we respond when there those that hurt us or injure us in some way. We are not to retaliate or to seek revenge. Remember, our Savior could have called down legions of angels to rescue and deliver him, but he did not, because he was meek in heart.

And then we see further that are walk must be *with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love*. We must be patient with one another ... with must sustain and lift up one another. As brothers and sisters in Christ, this is what we are to for one another – and even to the non Christian as a witness to them.

There was the story about an American who was a prisoner of war in Japan during the 2nd World War. He went back to Japan as a missionary, and in the providence of God came into contact with his jailer, who had, to say the least, not treated him well. And in the spirit of Christ, he forgave him, witnessed to him and by the grace of God he became a Christian. This is what these words mean.

The reason that we are to walk this way – and again, as we compare scripture with scripture we see other things that we are to do and not to do – but the reason we are to walk this way is seen as we continue: "*endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*"

As Christians we are the body of Christ – and we are to be one. We might remember the prayer of our Savior on the night of his betrayal – where he prayed for his disciples and all who would believe in him: John 17:20-21: "*I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.*"

The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is one Church. Yes, because of our sinful natures and differences of interpretation there are different branches of Christ's Church. We know that there are differences in Baptism, views of the Lord's Supper, eschatology, ways of worship and some other points of doctrine – but the bottom line is that all who have trusted in Christ as Savior and Lord ... all who have been called by God are one in Christ.

Paul says this in his letter to the Galatians – Galatians 3:28: "*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*"

This is who we are, as those whom God has called and as result we are to be one. Whatever differences we might have among ourselves and other brothers and sisters in Christ takes a back seat to that which we have in common – that being that we have all been saved by the shed blood of Jesus Christ. And therefore we are to walk worthy of the calling that we have received ... walking in the light of God's revealed Word ... walking the way that the Apostle Paul directs us all to walk.