

The Sunday Epistle readings from July 18 through August 15 are from Ephesians, which Paul wrote from prison in Rome to remind its readers/listeners what the church is and what membership in the church involves. These two thoughts are summed up in ch. 2.10: ***For we are his workmanship, for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*** Let's look at these four phrases.

1. ... ***we are his workmanship***...work of art...the painter's canvas, the poet's words.
2. ... ***created in Christ Jesus***...'in Christ' is used more than 30 times in Ephesians, each time referring to what Christ has done to accomplish our salvation; examples
 - *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, [1.3]*
 - *For he chose us in him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. [1.4]*
 - *In him [Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight [1.7]*
 - *But now in Christ Jesus you, who once were far off, have been brought near by the blood of Christ. [2.13]*
3. ... ***which God prepared beforehand*** – in Christ chosen from the 'foundation of the world' [1.4]
4. ... ***that we should walk in them*** –
 - Luther taught that our walk as followers of Jesus is a vocational walk that brings the gospel into the ordinary activities of our life.
 - Luther: "Vocations are "...masks of God. On the surface, we see an ordinary human face — our mother, the doctor, the teacher, the waitress, a pastor — but, beneath the appearances, God is ministering to us through them. God is hidden [masked] in human vocations."

Our vocational walk is a **worthy walk** – "*I...urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*". [4.1-3]

- *walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called* – what God asks for he gives...we are first called to faith, then called to live in faith.

Our vocational walk is a **baptismal walk** – "*Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds...darkened in their understanding...alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. [but] you learned [in] Christ [to]...put off your old self, which is corrupt through deceitful desires, and put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*" [4.17-24]

- Baptism forgives, restores, and motivates vocational living. What God asks for he gives
- Such is the nature of the Means of Grace through which God forgives sin, at the same time restoring believers to a life of service {vocation}.

Our vocational walk imitates God – *“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ² And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”* [5.1-2]

- This is the AGAPE walk, the love of the mind [will] that responds to a need only your vocational gifts can fill.
- Again, what God asks for he gives as we live life modeling Christ.

Our vocational walk is a **virtuous** walk – *“Walk as children of light and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.”* [5.18-19]

- Deliberately reflecting the values of Christ who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Our vocational walk is a **careful** walk – *“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.”* [5.15]

- *“Look carefully then how you walk”* – let scripture interpret ‘carefully’...
 - *“And Jesus began to say to them, “Take heed [walk] that no one leads you astray. ⁶ Many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and they will lead many astray.”* [Mark 13.5]
 - *“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed [walk] lest he fall.”* [1 Corinthians 10:12]

Luther would remind us that our vocations are God’s Masks, behind which He remains hidden, although He does all things...“God is the giver of all good gifts; but you must... take the bull by the horns, which means you must work to give God an occasion and a mask.”

We give God an “occasion and a mask” as we...

1. Daily walk as His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for the work He has set aside for us to do from the foundation of the world
2. Daily walk worthy of the calling to which we have been called.
3. Daily put off the old self, and put on the new self created in the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness
4. Daily walk in love as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us.
5. Daily walk as children of the light, discerning what is pleasing to the Lord.
6. Daily and carefully walk in the wisdom of scripture, making the best use of our time because the days are evil.

All this to the glory of God, and for the sake of His kingdom on earth as it will be lived in heaven forever.