

**Worthy of the Calling (Ephesians 1:1-6)**  
**1. 2. 2011**

**Pastor Edward Cheng**

We are starting this New Year with a new ministry theme. Last year's theme was, "Love in Action Love in Truth," and this year's theme is "Living a Life Worthy of the Calling." This is from Ephesians 4:1: "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received." In previous years we have not kept to the ministry theme very well and it is usually forgotten by February. But this year, I would like to stick to this theme by doing a sermon series through Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians.

First of all, the structure of Ephesians divides it into two parts. The first three chapters talk about salvation and how wonderful it truly is to be blessed as a child of God. The second part, composing of the last three chapters, tells us how to live in light of this salvation. The first part is more theological, where Paul desires to deepen our understanding of salvation. The second part is practical, as Paul tells us what our lives should look like based on the facts of our salvation. The linchpin verse is Ephesians 4:1, connecting the theology in the first half of the book with the practical life application in the second half.

There are several ramifications of this linchpin verse. The first is that our behavior as Christians is not about earning salvation. We do not follow mere rules for rules sake. Our desire to live godly lives comes from understanding and meditating on God's goodness to us and the wonder of His salvation. We obey because we appreciate God's love for us, not because we are afraid of going to hell.

The second ramification is that if we accept God's salvation there is a clear expectation of transformation in our lives. It is not a hope or a wish, but is an expectation. If we are saved, every day should bring us further from the way we lived before we were saved. We don't have to have been violent criminals beforehand to change in our daily lives. We can change with small things, in the way we respond to people for example. This is a challenge to us who call ourselves Christians. Do you really see change? If not, you should be concerned and ask why because according to Paul, there has to be change.

Finally, by saying "I urge you," Paul is showing that he realizes change does not come easily. He knows it's difficult, even though on a theoretical level we know change must occur when the Holy Spirit is in us. In practice though, it does take effort. Changing our lives is not the path of least resistance. To cast aside our old ways is hard, but God is patient with us.

So first we must ask if there is any change in our lives, and if not, why. If there is change, is it a response to God's goodness, or because of fear or trying to earn salvation? Then we should praise God for his patience and ask him for guidance to transform our lives.

We start at the beginning of the letter. Here, at the beginning, we see Paul's customary greeting. Paul gives his name, his authority as an apostle of Christ, the people to whom he is writing, and then a greeting and blessing. It's worth noting at this point that in this first verse, many of the older and more reliable manuscripts of the New Testament do not contain the words, "In Ephesus." It is thought that these were actually not in the original text, but were later additions. The line probably read originally, "To the saints, the faithful in Christ Jesus." And instead of having a particular people group in mind, this was probably meant to be a circular letter. Paul wanted the letter read aloud and passed on from place to place. It was not meant for only people in one city but for all Christians. This is why Paul does not mention specific people by name, as he does in other letters, like those to the Thessalonians. Neither does he say how much he misses the people in Ephesus, or how he served them in the past. This letter, unlike others, is directly to us, the believers. In Thessalonians, we were eavesdropping on what Paul wanted to tell the Thessalonians, but here he is addressing us directly. And Paul's message to us is that we should be overwhelmed by God's salvation and live a life that reflects that.

As we continue in this new sermon series, we would do well to know that Paul is speaking to us in this letter. He has asking us to consider again the wonder of our salvation and then to allow our lives to be a reflection of the wonder.