

Therefore!

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I am currently preaching through Paul's letter to the Ephesians and recently got to Ephesians 4:1 where Paul writes "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,". Notice that first word, "Therefore"! Have you ever thought about what the "therefore" is there for?! That single word tells us so much about how to properly study and apply God's word! I call these "The Therefore Principles"!

The Connectedness of Scripture Principle. Every verse has a context; the meaning of every verse is found only in its context! No verse stands alone! One of the worst errors you can ever make is to pull a verse out of its context and use it to mean something that it doesn't mean. This is called "proof-texting" because one decides to prove their idea and goes to Scripture to grab a verse that "sounds" like it supports the point (usually doesn't)! So, what does "Therefore" show us in Ephesians 4:1? You cannot isolate the meaning in Ephesians 4-6 from the content of Ephesians 1-3! The whole book is connected together with "Therefore"! That single word demands that you to go back and see why Paul is imploring you to walk worthy! Do you see that?

The Foundation Principle. Now let's see God's meaning of this word "therefore"! The Foundation Principle can be stated as: All biblical application is based on biblical facts and biblical principles (i.e. doctrine). Everything God requires of us is based on facts and/or principles He has given us! We are always given the "foundation" that is the basis of the life God expects us to live. The letters of the New Testament are well-known for starting with multiple chapters of doctrine, followed by multiple chapters of duty! Ephesians 1-3 is doctrine. Ephesians 4-6 is duty! According to the Foundation Principle, the "Therefore" in Ephesians 4:1 is saying to us "Based on all God has done for you in Christ, you must THEREFORE do the following...".

The Motivation Principle. When I consider what God requires of me, what is my motivation to obey? For example, God says "Thou shall not kill." Why do I not want to kill? Is it just because the government will punish me? No, the principle for not killing is given in Genesis 9:6 "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man." I don't want to kill anyone because all men are made in the image of God! That's my spiritual motivation! Let's take the Foundation Principle and make personal as the Motivation Principle. We just saw that God gives me facts and/or principles as a foundation for what He requires of us. What is the content of those facts and principles? Answer: The content of the facts and principles of Scripture tell us who God is and what God has done for us in Jesus Christ! My motivation to live God's way is in response to what Christ has done for me! What did He do for me? He sent His sinless Son to be my substitute in the eternal death I deserve for my sin! He has given me the free gift of eternal life! Yes, I'm motivated to live for Him! The Motivation Principle can be stated as: Who God is and what He has

done for me in Christ (i.e. the doctrine of Scripture) is my motivation to obey Him and be like Him!

The Work Principle. It should be obvious by now that “therefore” means that there is something for you to do! Paul wrote to the Philippians to “work out your salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12). To the Corinthians, Paul said that the spiritual life takes discipline! “I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.” (1 Corinthians 9:27). He also told the Corinthians: “Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God”(2 Corinthians 7:1). Simply stated, the Work Principle says that we are commanded to work hard on our side of spiritual growth in response to what God has done for us through Jesus Christ!

One simple word tells us so much! But, all the words of the Bible will do you no good unless you have committed your life to following Jesus Christ with all your heart, mind and soul! And, you won’t know how to do that unless you have committed your time and effort to know Him and what He expects through the Living Word, the Bible.

Therefore, get going!

God Bless!

Bill