

A life Worthy of the Gospel.  
Philippians 1:27-30

John 18:28-40

Matthew 7:15-23

Congregation. Psalm 133 and 134

Well, now its been a few weeks since we were back here, Since I had to work last week it created this gap between our time here in Philippians, I am inclined to ask if anyone can remember what we talked about 2 weeks ago...but I won't, I will spare you the embarrassment and instead just spend a little time recapping and refreshing your memory.

Let us start out this morning by reading our passage that we looked at 2 weeks ago, starting in verse 19-26. This passage shows where Paul's heart and mind is. Which really is the same place it always is in all of his writings. No matter what, his goal, his life's mission is to preach Christ. He was arrested, a prisoner of the Roman Empire awaiting trial before Caesar. The Jews were seeking to have him put to death, but 2 things were operating in Paul's favor, 1. He was a Roman citizen giving him all the legal protections of such, and 2. The Jews did not have the authority to put anyone to death so they had to rely on the Roman Empire to carry out capitol punishment.

What the book of Acts tells us is that when the Jews transferred him over into the hands of the Roman's they were seeking to have him put to death but the Romans actually found no such crimes that would warrant such a punishment. So it would appear that while he was a prisoner he was giving great freedom by being aloud to stay in a house instead of the prison itself, the only problem was that he had a guard chained to him at all times.

While this may seem like a horrible place for a traveling missionary to be, Paul did not seem to think so and we see that in his writing here to the Philippians. He was confident that once his case would be heard by Caesar that he would be set free, but ultimately he had already understood that this sort of life or death situation that he was in did not really matter as long as he focused on glorifying Christ through it.

He says, "with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life, or be death." He understood that no matter his fate, it was God who was in control and that nothing would happen to him outside of God's sovereign plan for him. I don't think that Paul's confidence was in the Roman judicial system, because just like we see in our own politics, if someone pays the right amount of money, or has enough clout they can pretty much get by whatever they want.

Paul tells us right up front in verse 19 where his confidence comes from, "through prayer, and supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." But even if he was wrong, even if God's plan for him was not to be delivered from the hands of the Romans and the Jews who were seeking to have him killed, he knew that if the Jews succeeded and he was to be executed, that he would be united with Christ. Paul saw death as a rather positive thing, he didn't fear it, nor did he trying to avoid it but rather he embraced it for he understood that to be absent from the body was to be present with the Lord.

But as I said last time we were here talking about this, that doesn't meant that Paul was suicidal, or encouraging such behavior and thoughts. In fact the opposite, for he understood that as long as he lived he could serve Christ here and be a great benefit to the family of God. Verse 22. " But if I live on in the flesh this will mean fruit from my labor. " And again in verse 24 " Nevertheless to remain in the

flesh is more needful for you.”

He wasn't seeking to die, he was expressing the peace that he had in Christ that no matter what was to happen to him was of little importance as long as it was Christ who was glorified. As is usually the case, this past week or so I have been thinking on the last time we were here in this chapter and I had a few thoughts that I wish I would have had while studying and preparing this. But no matter, for this refresher afford the opportunity to say it now.

Paul here is pretty much staring down a life or death situation, not many of us have had to deal with that yet in our lives, or so we think but the reality is if we are to be honest with ourselves every single person is faced with a life or death situation constantly.

While we may feel confident that we will see tomorrow, it seems that everything is going along just fine, the reality is that we are mere moments from death. But this is not really the life or death situation I want to talk about here, I am not thinking along the traditional physical understanding, but rather upon the soul.

We had the conversation Sunday morning about the world's perception to religion. And Clay shared that it seems that we have reached a spot in our society of true unbelief. This isn't the active atheist out to disprove God, for really we have reached a point that isn't even necessary anymore. The reality is.. no one cares. Atheists and agnostics no longer need to argue against the existence of God, really they are just wasting their breath, they are fighting a fight that no one cares about anymore.

This truly is a trying time to be a Christian, for the very thing that we have that offers life, is seen as quaint, antiquated, annoying, and a waste of time. It seems that most people have little thought toward such things, or little care. We live in a time when people actually believe the earth is flat! I am reminded of Pilate's questioning of Jesus in John 18 we read this morning. “What is truth.”

Pastor Vic talked about this years ago, that there was an attack on objective truth, That the growing thought was that you make your own truth. And here we are, 2018, fake news, and photo shop. It makes it really hard to know anymore what is true, and what has been altered to appear true. This has ingrained our entire society and it has become now the collective mindset. Truth is what I believe, and you may believe something different but that doesn't make it not true, because it is true to you.

This is what we as Christians are fighting against today, an apathetic world who no longer cares, who has completely bought the idea that nothing really is true, or at the very least something is true for a while until it has been debunked and a new truth takes its place. So it would seem that this decades old attack on the idea of things being objectively true has been rather successful for the common mindset now toward religion is just like that of anything else, “Hey, if it works for you that is fine, just keep me out of it because it isn't true for me.” The biggest expression of this that we see as a denial of objective truth is the rise in the idea of gender fluidity.

I am not male, nor female, I am what ever I believe that I am..in fact I believe that there is now people claiming that there exists up to more than 100 different genders! And it is all based around this idea that we all make our own truth. What we are seeing is the denial of abject truth in our society. But that does not change the fact that there is, for instance, everyone dies.

That is one truth that can not be denied. While everyone may suppress it, not want to think about it, or talk about it the fact remains that each person will die. So back to what I was saying, we are all faced with a life or death situation.

In the event of the inevitable death, I ask, will you have eternal life with Christ, or eternal death in hell. I know, I know, the well educated skeptics out there will ridicule me for talking with such fantastical, antiquated ideas..but I ask them, “Do you know what happens after death.” While they may answer that they will cease to exist, the reality is, they really don't know, probably haven't given it much thought, and the idea that our soul is not eternal is a sick sort of comfort, a deception to avoid the fear and anxiety of the possibility of eternal torment.

This is the life or death situation that humanity faces each and every day, even though they are not aware of it because they suppress it, they avoid it, and try to deny it...but death is an abject truth, death is unavoidable and we don't know when it will happen. But instead of being afraid of it, we Christians, like Paul, understand it. Death is the punishment upon the world because of Sin, through Adam all died, but through Christ we are made alive. 2 weeks ago I asked this question, Christian, do you share Paul's mindset? Can you like Paul, say To live is Christ, but to die is gain? I ask this because your answer reflects upon the very soul. This is a question that challenges and goes to the heart of what you believe.

There is an element of fear in death of course, it is the great unknown, but I am not asking about being afraid of dying, or being afraid of how one may die...I am asking to think about your salvation, think about death, are you afraid of what comes next? Are you afraid of what happens after you die?

IF Christ is your savior, then you should not be for he promises you, just as he did the thief on the cross, “Today, you will be with me in paradise.” There is much grace in youth, but as we age, as we feel our bodies beginning to die, this truth becomes a constant reminder and a stark reality, in fact I believe the aging process stands as a witness to us. As we age, death looms ever closer, becomes more of a concern and I think proves out exactly what Christ said in Matthew we read this morning. You will be known by your fruits, by your actions as to the validity of your faith. When faced with death, are you concerned about your legacy here on earth, or are you concerned with your ministry in Christ? How you answer this question will point to where your heart is.

Be wary that you do not deceive yourself, and find yourself to be like those Christ talked about in Matthew, do not be one of the many that say “Lord Lord, have we not done all these great things for you? I like how the NIV puts it, “Then I will tell them plainly, I never knew you, Away from me you evil doers!”

So, on that note it brings us to our passage today, but really it flows right into what Paul is continuing to say here, let us read verse 27 to the end of the chapter. Paul is encouraging the Philippians to continue on in the faith, to stand fast in one spirit, to be united and strive together for the gospel. This is another mark of the truly faithful person. Paul says here, “Let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs.” The truly faithful are not just faithful when the pastor is watching, they live a life of faith and it dictates and directs every step of the way.

For those of us who have jobs we can understand this completely, for each and every one of us probably has that coworker or 2 who only really works when the boss is around, the rest of the time is spent doing everything else other than what they should be doing. Sadly I think this is the life of many

who confess Christ today, not only do we have a problem in our society with apathy, within the Christian faith we have those who truly only practice when they think they are being watched.

These are those who come to church on Sunday, put on a happy face, they put on a show of piety, but during the rest of the week they don't appear to be much different than anyone else in the world. These are those who deceive themselves, and are those who will stand before the judgment seat listing off their achievements as if to gain merit, but God will say.. Depart from me, evil doing, for those things you did not do in my name for my glory, but rather for your own pride.

A true christian is one who is a christian not just on Sunday, but on every single day of the week. They are not a christian only when the times are good and they feel blessed, but even during the dark times when their faith is tested. Verse 28 here, Paul continues on, after saying to make sure the way you conduct yourself is worthy of the gospel, make sure the way you live day to day is worthy of the salvation you claim, stand fast, be with one mind, striving together, verse 28 “ and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.

If one is living a life worthy of the gospel they should also find themselves in unity with others who do the same. Striving together for one goal, which is the very thing that we find unity in, which is Christ. James put it this way, Chapter 4, verse 11. “ Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one law giver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another.”

James is implying that unity among Christians is not just a nice side effect but rather it is a requirement, something that will be not something that should be. Earlier in the chapter here in James he tell us exactly what causes disunity. Verse 1. “ Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have, You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war, Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?

Our own selfish prides, and desires often times is the very thing that gets in the way of Christian unity. Paul says we should be striving for the gospel, together. Often times what causes divisions in a fellowship is the fact that they are not longer striving for the gospel, but let their own personal agenda's dictate their actions. A church who splits over the color of the carpet, is not a church that is focused on the gospel, they are not finding their unity in Christ, and letting things of this world that will one day pass away stand in the way of unity for the gospel.

Continuing on here, we should be of one spirit, of one mind, striving together for the gospel, verse 28, “and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God. A person who is living worthy of the gospel will not fear people.

They are not going to like the things that you say, but that should not deter you from preaching the gospel to them. The very gospel you preach that is your salvation, to them it is a gospel of destruction. No one likes to be told they are wrong, no one likes to be condemned and that is the very thing the gospel we share does to the world. Unless you turn, repent then you face an eternity in hell.

As I was saying earlier, no one wants to face this reality, no one wants to think about eternity.

And when confronted with the gospel that is the very thing that they are pressed upon to think about. They love the world, they enjoy their sin, and concern themselves little with the punishment of such.

That is why it takes God to give them a new heart able to hear the gospel, able to receive and understand. It is God who calls, it is God who prepares the heart, and we should strive to seize those opportunities that God gives for the gospel. Caring little for the things of this world, and caring much for the things from Christ.

That is how unity is found among Christians. We are all individuals, with differing backgrounds, different lifestyles, different interests, different opinions but underneath it all should be Christ and it is that we should seek and that we should see in each other drawing together in unity for the cause of the Gospel. That is how Paul can say in verse 18, "Only in that every way whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached, and in this I rejoice." Little else matters, except unity around the gospel of Christ.

Finishing up here, looking at the last 2 verses of chapter 1. "For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him but also to suffer for His sake, having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me." We have been granted by Christ not only to believe in him, but to suffer? That does not sound like your best life now! The reality is, all those who teach this idea of a prosperity gospel are false teachers. If someone stands up at the pulpit on Sunday and says "that everything should be going great for your life, God wants to grant you everything you want, everything you desire, and if you don't have it, if you are suffering that is because of your sin. God doesn't want you to suffer, he wants to bless you.

That doesn't sound like what Paul is saying here, he says that for us, it has been granted, it has been given to us to suffer for Christ. The Greek word Paul uses here is *charizomai*, which means to be graciously given. Suffering for Christ is not due to our failure to walk faithfully, but rather is the result of faithfully letting our conduct be worthy of the gospel.

Look at Paul, he was put in chains for the preaching of the gospel, held captive with a guard chained to him day and night for 2 years, this doesn't sound like your best life now does it. Yet as we have seen time and time again, Paul does not complain, does not blame God but rather rejoices in his affliction for his has been found worthy to suffer for the gospel. In an odd way, this suffering only stands as proof of his effective ministry. Christ himself was crucified, and died for the very things he taught, should we not also expect persecution and suffering?

But in that suffering we are not left alone, I will end here with a few words of encouragement to those who suffer for the sake of Christ, and this doesn't stand only as an encouragement to those who are suffering, but it should also be an encouragement to those of us to be confident in our Christian testimony despite the persecution it may bring.

First, is the fact that God is sovereign over all. Paul understood that even in prison, it is where God wanted him for his purpose and plan. Think of Job, all the suffering he went through, it was not because of something he had done, it was not a punishment but rather it was God who allowed it. Knowing that our lord and savior is the very one who is in control over our suffering should be a great comfort to us.

Second, is the final judgment and renewal of all things. If there was no judge, if injustice was to go unpunished we would be left in despair in our sufferings, but we know that our sovereign Lord is the

judge of the world and he will one day come to make all things right. This is our hope, and allows us to entrust ourselves to him.

And finally, the fact that Christ came, suffered and died for us. The perfect man of God, came and suffered, not for any sins of his own, but for ours so we may be found holy and blameless before the father. Paul stands here as a prime example of how we should stand in the face of persecution and suffering. When trials come, sing praises to God who delivers.. if not in this life, he will deliver you in the next. Rejoice in Him, who has found your worthy to suffer for his sake, and continue to work, to press toward the mark being faithful and true to the gospel you preach. Living each day worthy of the gospel.