



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Sunday, September 18-24 (A) – Philippians 1:21-30

Focus: *Live Your Life in a Manner Worthy of the Gospel of Christ*

word of life

“Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, and are in no way intimidated by your opponents.” Philippians 1:27-28 (NRSV)

Read Philippians 1:21-30

Paul writes from prison to the congregation in Philippi with words overflowing with love, support, and encouragement. The purpose of the letter is to provide the Philippians an update on his current situation and to offer advice about putting faith into daily practice. Paul is uncertain if his imprisonment will lead to his death. It is possible this letter will be his final correspondence.

1. *What would it have been like for a congregation to receive a letter from Paul?*
2. *What significance would a letter written in prison carry?*

Years earlier, Paul had stopped in Philippi on one of his missionary trips. There he had met Lydia, a believer. By the time he left their thriving community, there were other believers as well. This faith community founded by Paul was rooted in Christ. This partnership between the congregation in Philippi and Paul continued over the years through prayer, financial support, correspondence and occasional visits, primarily from someone from Philippi visiting Paul.

Memories of the Philippians bring Paul joy and sustain him during the uncertainty of prison life. He prays with thanksgiving for this congregation constantly. Although uncertain about his future, whether he will stay imprisoned, be set free, or be killed, it helps knowing the Philippians are praying for him and offering support. What a gift this congregation is to Paul.

3. *Use your imagination and describe the congregation in Philippi.*
4. *What does it feel like when others pray for you during difficult times?*

Paul recognizes Christ uses him in every situation—even in prison. Paul does not invest his own valuable time and energy worrying about things beyond his control, but offers his words and life as a daily witness to Christ. His words are clear, “For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain.” (Philippians 1:21 NRSV)

5. *What do the words “for to me, living is Christ and dying is gain” mean to you?*
6. *How has tribulation helped Paul gain clarity and wisdom?*
7. *Does Paul’s positive response to his own troubles give him more or less credibility? How so?*

In Philippians 1:27 Paul shifts his focus to the Philippians. He invites and encourages them with these words, “Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. . .” Paul knows it is not easy to follow Christ, and life can be challenging. His words written from prison carry significance and ring loudly. In all circumstances, live a life worthy of Christ. That is the goal. It takes daily practice to live a consistent life based on Christ.

8. *What does it mean for you to “live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ?”*

word among us

Jenny was helping her grandma clean the attic when they discovered an old dusty chest. Her grandma smiled with misty eyes as she gently pulled out a stack of old letters. Jenny recognized her grandpa's handwriting. Immediately, she knew these were love letters sent to her grandma by her grandpa while he served overseas during the war.

In the soft light of evening, Jenny's grandma read the letters, cried a bit, but smiled as the memories flooded her heart. Letters did not come often during the war, so each letter was guarded like gold and read many times. Even after all these years, Jenny's grandma seemed to have each letter memorized. During the uncertainty of war, these love letters had given her hope.

1. *Share a time in your life when you received a special letter in the mail.*
2. *Do emails carry the same weight as hard-copy letters? How so?*

Paul's love letter to the Philippians is a witness of his affection for this congregation. Although in prison and facing his possible death, Paul takes time to write and remind them how much he desires to be reunited. In case Paul does not have the opportunity to visit them, a letter will have to suffice.

The words carry a significant weight. Paul is not concerned about whether he lives or dies because either way he is claimed by Christ. His focus is not on himself. Paul encourages the Philippians and followers of Jesus Christ in every age to live a life in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ. This sounds quite easy, but it is not.

3. *Think of someone who lives his or her life worthy of the Gospel of Christ. Describe that person.*
4. *What distracts us from living such a life?*
5. *What can we learn from a person who lives worthy of Christ?*

faith practice in daily life

Proclaim the good news of God in Christ through Word and deed

It is not just preachers who have the opportunity to proclaim the good news of God in Christ. In Philippians, Paul reminds us of the powerful witness of a person who lives a life consistent with Christ – in good times and bad. Paul invites each of us to shape our lives around Christ, so that whether we live or die, we belong to Christ.

6. *What does it mean to have Christ shape your life?*
7. *How do you respond to someone who is immobilized because of their sense of unworthiness?*

Paul's witness and words serve as a gentle challenge and commission for any who hope to follow Christ. In baptism, we are claimed by Christ and marked with the cross forever. During our life on this earth, we have the opportunity to discover and re-discover what that means as our life unfolds through conversations, relationships, and situations.

8. *What do you hope to remember from this lesson?*

Prayer

Gracious God, shape my life so I might live in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ. Amen

last word

Pray each day to be shaped
to live in a manner worthy of Christ.



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.