



grow. pray. study.

March 17, 2024 *Living a Life Worthy of Christ's Call*

Scripture: Ephesians 4:1-3 (CEB)

Worthy lives: united, brave and humble

MONDAY 3.18.24 Philippians 1:27-2:3

Paul urged Christians in Philippi to “live together in a manner worthy of Christ’s gospel,” to “stand firm, united in one spirit and mind.” The Greek deepened Paul’s thought: “The phrase ‘live together’ is drawn from a noun that means ‘citizen.’ Paul calls them to live as citizens of Christ’s realm rather than as Roman citizens.” * In Philippi, many people proudly upheld their status as Roman citizens even though they were not in Rome. Paul called his readers to live as citizens of God’s kingdom.

- Ponder the call to “live together in a manner worthy of Christ’s gospel.” If someone asked you “What **is** that gospel?” how you would answer? (If you’re not sure, review [2 Timothy 1:8-10](#), among many places that summarized Paul’s core good news message.) What does it mean for you to live in a manner worthy of that life-changing, world-changing message? In what ways is that a bigger challenge than just giving up a few bad habits?
- Paul’s call to live out our “citizenship” in God’s kingdom may be especially important in this heated election year. Most, though not all, GPS readers are United States citizens, and love our home country. Paul, himself a Roman citizen by birth (cf., [Acts 22:25-28](#)), said his (and our) ultimate loyalty as believers is to Christ’s domain, not any earthly realm. How do your priorities, choices and activities shift if you think of yourself as a “citizen of Christ’s realm” above any other loyalty?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you gave your all to open the doors of your kingdom for even a struggler like me. I have a lot to learn and grow in, but I want to be a citizen of your kingdom. Count me in! Amen.

* Jerry L. Sumney, study note on Philippians 1:27-30 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 376 NT.

Worthy lives: walking in newness

TUESDAY 3.19.24 Romans 6:1-5, 12:1-2

Some tried to discredit Paul, saying, “Let’s keep sinning, so there can be even more grace.” Paul said, “Absolutely not” (literally in Greek “May it never be!”) He said baptism linked Christian believers with Jesus’ death and resurrection. In chapter 12, he called the Roman Christians to offer themselves to God as a “living sacrifice,” not conformed to “this world.” “‘This world’ is literally ‘this age.’ The ‘renewing of your mind,’ then, includes thinking as citizens of the coming new world.” *

- In the ancient world, most people had made a sacrifice to some god. That nearly always meant killing an animal in the right temple or shrine. If that were your background, how would you need to shift your thinking and acting to respond to Paul’s call to “present your bodies as a **living** sacrifice”? In what ways are you willing to put yourself, your life, “on the altar” to live in a new way each day, offering yourself to God?
- Scholar William Barclay drew an important idea for how we seek to share our faith with others: “In modern times we may have tended to stress the fact that acceptance of the Christian way need not make so very much difference in a... life. Paul would have said that it ought to make all the difference in the world.” ** Jesus’ grace delivers you from all that is hurtful, outwardly or inwardly, and gives you a fresh start. How can living in that newness shape a life worthy of Jesus’ gift?

Prayer: Jesus, to choose you as my “Lord” is to say, “I want you, not my broken habits or instincts, to rule my life.” Thank you for giving me the promise of a new, better way to live. Amen.

* NIV, *Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible* (p. 9891). Zondervan. Kindle Edition. In [Galatians 1:4](#), Paul called “this age” “the present evil age.”

** William Barclay, *The Letter to the Romans* (Revised Edition). Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1975, p. 85. Paul spelled out how “all the difference in the world” can look in [Romans 12:9-21](#), a passage worth your attention.

Worthy lives: like Paul, live in Christ's righteousness

WEDNESDAY 3.20.24 Galatians 2:19-21, Philippians 3:9-11

The apostle Paul used strong language in Galatians. Before Jesus met him, he had trusted in external rituals to make him right with God. Faith in Jesus and trust in the Holy Spirit, not dutiful rites, had changed his life, and he had taught the Galatians that. That was always personal, never abstract. He wrote a remarkably similar message to the Philippian Christians about how making Jesus his Lord, and the source of his righteousness, had changed his life.

- In Galatians, Paul wasn't thinking of a technical detail. Scholar N. T. Wright wrote, "It isn't a matter of a few twists and turns in the interpretation of the gospel, or... of the Jewish law. It isn't simply about one style of missionary policy as against another. It is a matter of who you are in the Messiah. It's as basic as that." * Do you tend to call on Jesus only when you need to, or have you come to see your whole identity rooted "in Christ," in the Jesus who died for you?
- "In Christ," Paul wrote, "I have a righteousness that is not my own and that does not come from the Law but rather from the faithfulness of Christ. It is the righteousness of God that is based on faith." Rather than relying on his own achievements, what basis for confidence and self-worth did Paul claim? Is whatever righteousness you believe you have "your own," or does your confidence, your very identity, rest fully on God's gracious gift of divine righteousness through Christ?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, as I read Paul's description of his life, my prayer is, in the words of the classic hymn, "Live out thy life within me, O Jesus, king of kings." Dwell in my heart and keep shaping my existence. Amen.

Worthy lives: wisdom, bearing fruit, giving thanks

THURSDAY 3.21.24 Colossians 1:9-12

Paul devoted his life to tirelessly starting Christian churches from scratch. There was no playbook, no example to follow. The Jewish and Roman authorities didn't like what he was doing and put him in prison ([Colossians 4:18](#)). Imagine starting a new business, organization, or small group. Imagine trying to do that from prison. How did Paul lead the fledgling church startups from prison? He did two things: he wrote letters and prayed. What we wrote and how he prayed are good examples to follow.

- Paul prayed for wisdom for his readers. He clearly believed this was one of the most important things the Colossians should have. How do you get wisdom? Wisdom comes from experience. Experience comes from time. There are no shortcuts. How much time are you spending with God through prayer, Bible reading and community? What steps might you take to prioritize time with God in your everyday life, so that you might grow in wisdom?
- Paul also prayed for his readers to "give thanks with joy" to God. Giving thanks, or gratitude, is a powerful force for good that can quite literally transform your mind. "Paul would say to us, as he said to the young Christians in Colossae, that a life lived in the presence of this God will be a life full of thanksgiving. Or have we forgotten who our God really is?" * What are you grateful for in your life? Take a minute to list of things you're grateful for, then offer God a prayer of gratitude.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for loving me. I want to live a worthy life pleasing to you. Help me grow in wisdom and gratitude, so that I can "produce fruit in every good work" and shine your light to others. Amen.

Worthy lives: kind, compassionate, forgiving like God

FRIDAY 3.22.24 Ephesians 4:29-32

Ephesians 4:1 (which we'll read tomorrow) urged readers to live "worthy of the call" from God. In that context, these verses spelled out practical choices to move your life in worthy directions. Treating others with "bitterness, losing your temper, anger, shouting, and slander" greatly harms relationships. Letting Christ change your life from the inside out opens you to fruit like compassion, kindness and a forgiving heart. God works in these qualities to strengthen (heal when needed) your relationships.

- "Paul sums up his advice. He tells us to be kind (*chrēstos*). The Greeks defined this quality as the disposition of mind which thinks as much of its neighbor's affairs as it does of its own. He tells us to forgive others as God forgave us. In one sentence, Paul lays down the law of personal relationships—that we should treat others as Jesus Christ has treated us." ** Which of your relationships best approach that standard? In which do you see the most room for growth?
- Scholar N. T. Wright wrote, "People who are enslaved to anger and malice may think they are 'free' to 'be themselves', but they are in bondage." * When have you said words meant to hurt, and then thought, "Why did I say that?" What helps you understand your feelings so you don't blurt out damaging words? Before you forward that e-mail, or post that tart social media response, are you willing to ask, "Does this give grace? Does it build up? Can I picture Jesus sending this?"

Prayer: Lord Jesus, when you make me aware of anger or bitterness inside myself, help me not to hide from or rationalize that. Do your transforming work in me, shaping a life worthy of my calling. Amen.

* William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Revised Edition). Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1976, p. 160.

** N. T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2004, p. 56).

Worthy lives: humility, gentleness and patience

SATURDAY 3.23.24 Ephesians 4:1-4, 15-16

This passage defined “worthy” lives through key principles for people who worship (and often work, study, serve or give) together. The principles are vital for families, who spend their whole life living under the same roof. Tension and conflicts inevitably arise in every such relationship for one simple reason: we are different. But Ephesians said diversity was God’s plan. It spoke of “accepting each other with love.” Those are key choices if you want to “live as people worthy of the call you received from God.” Scholar N. T. Wright captured the nature of that call: “At every moment, in every decision, with every word and action, they are to be aware that the call to follow Jesus the Messiah, and give him their complete loyalty, takes precedence over everything else. In particular, this must lead them back again and again to celebrate their unity, to maintain and guard it.” *

- In all your relationships, can you see the ways that the differences between people, when valued and respected, bring depth, richness, and strength (even when they also pose challenges)? It is a fact that many times differences play a big role in drawing people together, as each one can add a dimension another may be lacking. How can valuing, honoring, and celebrating the strength that grows from our differences help to keep you from building relationship-destroying walls of separation? The passage also said one of the ways to help each other grow (in the church, and certainly in any family) is “speaking the truth in love.” Which do you find harder with those you relate to regularly: speaking the truth at all, or doing so in love? What can help you grow toward maturity in both of those dimensions?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, make me a worthy friend and family member who always speaks the truth, but who only speaks it in love. And help me to listen in that spirit as well as speak. Amen.

Prayer Requests – cor.org/prayer *Prayers of peace and comfort for:*