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A WORTHY LIFE

Several years ago there was a program on television called the Millionaire. In this series a very wealthy person would give another person one million dollars with no strings attached and then would observe what the person did with the money. Did they help others, did it change their personality, did it make them better or worse? Can you imagine what you would do if, all of a sudden, you came into great wealth. Let's say that you knew the benefactor and that he wanted you to take the great wealth that you had been given and share it with others in an unselfish way. You could use what you needed, but you would need to tell others about the gift and about the person that made it all possible and to share the wealth with them. It doesn't sound like too bad a job, does it? Well, isn't this what salvation in Jesus Christ is about? We have been given something that money can't buy, that is so precious that all the wealth in the world would not be sufficient to purchase it. Eternal life in Christ is not for sale and it is worth more than all the world (remember Jesus asked, "What would it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?"). It is given to us and we are commanded to share the news about this great gift from God with others and to tell them about Jesus Who made it all possible. Each of us should be living our life so that it reflects the salvation and eternal life that we possess. It should be a life that would cause others to want to know the Savior. We could characterize such a life as being worthy of the salvation that the person possesses.

Far too few Christians live such a life. The great former leader of India, Gandhi once said "If Christians would live like Christ, then they would lead all of the world to accept Him as Lord." The greatest barrier that the church has in winning people to the Lord is the bad example of professing Christians. Paul had much to say about living a life that reflects who we are in Christ in his letter to the Church at Philippi.

PHILIPPIANS 1:3-8 Paul was an encourager of Christians. He encouraged them by letting them know that he cared for them so much that he prayed for them. He encouraged them by letting them know that every time he thought of them, he was pleased and gave thanks to God for them. He encouraged them by letting them know that they gave joy to him because of their faithfulness. And he encouraged them by assuring them that God was continuing to work in their lives. He had high expectations for everyone of them to live worthy of the call he or she had in Christ.

Paul was in prison in Rome when he wrote this letter and he was encouraged by them. They had remembered him in his imprisonment and they were standing by him in their faithfulness to the message of the gospel and by obedience to the commands of Jesus. Because of this faithfulness, the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit would be effective in their lives. Salvation is a process that begins with conversion (the work begun in us) and continues

in sanctification (perfecting of the saints) and will be concluded in glorification.

PHILIPPIANS 1:9-11 Paul told them that he prayed for them, and this is that for which he prayed: their love would grow in knowledge and judgement or insight. We can't really love a person until we know them and gain insight into who they really are, neither can our love for God grow unless we learn more about Him and understand His values and principles. If we do that, then our choices of alternatives will be the best possible ones and will lead to purity in our lives. This is exactly what God wants to achieve in us in preparation for our becoming the Bride of Christ. The evidence of the right choices and purity will be the results that come from the presence of Christ in our lives. Paul calls these the fruits of righteousness. I would imagine that what Paul had in mind are the sort of things that he called the fruit of the Spirit in his letter to the Galatians. These are love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance, and faithfulness. As we bear such fruit (evidence) in our lives, God is glorified by it.

PHILIPPIANS 1:12-14 They may have felt pity for Paul in his prison predicament. Paul wanted them to know that he was still fulfilling his call in Christ and perhaps even more effectively because he was in prison. God gives us victory even in what might appear to be a defeat. The gospel was being preached in places that Paul (as a non-prisoner) could never have reached. We should never forget that God is in control. God is never surprised and He can and will have victory. Even people on the outside that were in the gospel ministry were inspired to be not less bold, but more bold because of Paul's imprisonment.

Paul was up in years, maybe in his sixties and he wasn't sure how he felt about how complete his mission was to bring the gospel to the Gentiles. He was torn between the possibility of getting out of prison and being back in circulation with the churches that he had helped establish and the possibility of going on to be with Jesus. He was content with either possibility. He thought that it would be more beneficial to the churches such as the one at Philippi if he were able to visit them. But he realized that might not happen. So he encouraged them to live worthy lives whether he would visit them or not.

PHILIPPIANS 1:27-30 "Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ." In other words, if you are saved, then let your life show evidence of that fact. If Paul could not come and see what they were doing, he wanted to at least hear about it. He wanted to know that they continued in their unity of faith.

The world, the flesh and the devil resist the Kingdom of God and oppose the citizens of the Kingdom. They would ridicule and intimidate Christians in an attempt to cancel out our effectiveness. We have no reason to be intimidated or frightened because Christ has overcome the world, has defeated Satan and has put to death the fleshly nature on the cross. The fact that Christians do not fear the authority of man but "fear God only" is a sign to the

world that it is doomed to be destroyed. Truth will not retreat and it will not go away, but it will prevail. It is likely that we may indeed suffer for standing for the truth, but our victory is in being faithful to the truth even as Jesus was. If we live as He lived, then we will encounter opposition as He did and suffer for the cause of Christ. We will never know complete victory over self until we realize that it is a privilege to not only believe on Jesus but also to suffer for His sake. We can never be worthy to be saved because salvation cannot be earned, but we can live a life that gives evidence of our salvation once the presence and power of the Holy Spirit invades and pervades our lives.