

**SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS**  
**Commentary by Michael Sigler**  
(Guest Commentary during August by  
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**Sharing God's Grace**

Philippians 1:18-29

**Key verse: 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.**

**(Philippians 1:27)**

The church at Philippi was dear to Paul's heart. The little band of believers loved Paul and supported his efforts to establish other churches. His friends grieved over Paul's suffering. But they were inspired by the way Paul's faith did not waver even when he was beaten and thrown in prison. They marveled that Paul believed God could use his imprisonment to spread the gospel.

Paul practiced positive thinking before Norman Vincent Peale made it popular. Even in the worst circumstances Paul continued to rejoice. He was confident that the living Christ was at work in his life and that the will of God would be accomplished. And Paul did acknowledge his need of, and his gratitude for, the prayer support of his Christian friends.

For Paul Christ was everything. He was ready to die for Christ if necessary but as long as he remained alive his primary goal was to proclaim Christ. His passion was to know Christ and to make him known. And to make Christ known was to share the gospel.

Paul admonished the Philippians to live a life "worthy of the gospel of Christ." To do this the Philippians would need to stand "firm in one spirit" and to strive "side by side with one mind." Their unity would be a strong witness to their opponents. This admonition of Paul as translated in *The Message* helps us to understand more clearly what Paul meant by a life "worthy of the gospel":

"Meanwhile, live in such a way that you are a credit to the Message of Christ. Let nothing in your conduct hang on whether I come or not. Your conduct must be the same whether I show up to see things for myself or hear of it from a distance. Stand united, singular in vision, contending for people's trust in the Message, the good news, not flinching or dodging in the slightest before the opposition. Your courage and unity will show them what they're up against: defeat for them, victory for you—and both because of God" (1:27-29).

If we are to be worthy of the gospel and work together in unity, we need to be sure what we mean by “the gospel.” Ask a dozen Christians in your local church to explain what the gospel means and you will probably receive a dozen different explanations. It is a strange thing that we all agree we need to share the gospel but we have no common agreement about what the gospel means.

Greg Gilbert has written a wonderful little book titled *What Is the Gospel?* (Published by Crossway, 2010). Gilbert observes that “the gospel is surrounded by a fog of confusion.” He affirms that the cross is the center of the gospel. He says, “I believe one of the greatest dangers the body of Christ faces today is the temptation to rethink and rearticulate the gospel in a way that makes its center something other than the death of Jesus on the cross in the place of sinners.”

Some people, for example, offer the simple explanation that the proclamation “Jesus is Lord” is the gospel. Gilbert challenges this assumption by pointing out that to say simply that “Jesus is Lord” is really “not good news at all if we don’t explain how Jesus is not just Lord but also Savior. He adds, “Lordship implies the right to judge, and we’ve already seen that God intends to judge evil. Therefore, to a sinner in rebellion against God and against his Messiah, the proclamation that Jesus has become Lord is terrible news. It means that your enemy has won the throne and is now about to judge you for your rebellion against him.”

Gilbert goes on to say that the New Testament offers a way for our rebellion to be forgiven. The scriptures teach us that our Lord Jesus was crucified so that sinners could be forgiven and brought into the joy of the kingdom. “Apart from that,” Gilbert says, “the declaration that ‘Jesus is Lord’ is nothing but a death sentence.”

If the gospel is true, and we believe it is, then we who believe must embrace it, understand it, and share it with those who are lost! Gilbert underlines this need when he writes, “If you are a Christian, realize that you hold in your hands the only true message of salvation the world will ever hear. There will never be another gospel, and there is no other way for people to be saved from their sins. If you friend, family, and coworkers are ever to be saved from their sins, it will be because someone speaks the gospel of Jesus Christ to them....There are many good things that we can do as Christians, but the fact is that most of those good things will happily be done also by people who are not Christians. But if we Christians fail to proclaim the gospel of Jesus, who else is going to do that? No one.”

Ponder deeply what it means to live a life of service to others. Surely our “service” to others will be incomplete if we fail to share the gospel of Christ with them. And for them to believe what we say, we must strive to live our lives “in a manner worthy of the gospel.” It is no small task to which we are called – but we serve an Awesome God who will gladly give us the grace needed to get the job done!