

Title: Live What You Believe

Text: Philippians 1:27-2:4

Date: January 11, 2015

Place: Decatur Church of God

A gospel song from years ago went something like this:

Some people go to church on Sunday and stand up there and shout.

And then they go to work on Monday and leave their Savior out.

They think they have done their duty and to the Lord they have been true.

But they'll find when they get to the judgment, their one day religion won't do.

You've got to live your religion every day.

You've got to live your religion every day.

On Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and all day Saturday.

You've got to live your religion every day.

The Christian faith must be a part of every day of the Christian's life. It is citizenship.

Philippians 1:27-2:4

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel [28] without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved--and that by God. [29] For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, [30] since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, [2] then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. [3] Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. [4] Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

The root meaning of the word translated “conduct” has to do with one’s whole lifestyle. The Philippians would associate it with citizenship. Paul appeals to that. He appeals to their sense of duty.

I. The Christian is challenged to conduct worthy of the gospel.

- A. It is a difficult conversion. (Our standards to gospel standards)

- a. Family standards are usually inadequate for the Christian life.
 - i. Values – emphasis put on money, fame, and achievement.
 - ii. Conduct sometimes less than Christian (e.g. How we plan to enter the “Golden Gates.”)
- b. Societal standards are less than Christian.
 - i. Privilege – “I deserve better.”
 - ii. Entitlement – “The world owes me.”
- c. Sometimes church standards are less than Christian.
 - i. Legal maneuvering is sometimes a carnal effort.
 - ii. “Everyone looks out for #1 – is accepted as normal.

*Canadian Mennonite author Rudy Wiebe aptly pictures how different things look to the person with spiritual eyes: “It could be like standing on your head to see the world clearer...If one morning you began walking on your hands, the whole world would be hanging. The trees, these ugly brick and tile buildings wouldn’t be fixed here so solid and reassuring; they’d be pendant. The more safe and reliable they seem now, the more helpless they’d be then...”

Once we are given “eyes to see” we recognize what a frail and temporary world we live in. We see the spiritual world as the solid one.

- B. A conversion to God’s standard is the result of spiritual insight.
 - a. It begins with a sincere search of and willingness to know the Gospel.
 - b. It may begin with information but goes beyond knowledge.

- c. It is the divine act of God in one's whole life:
 - i. Cleansing
 - ii. Purifying
 - iii. Forgiving
 - iv. Accepting

2 Cor. 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

*Telemachus, the fourth-century Christian, was an Asian hermit who lived in a remote village. He tended his garden and spent much of his time in prayer. One day he thought he heard the voice of God telling him to go to Rome, so he obeyed, setting out on foot. Weary weeks later, he arrived in the city at the time of a great festival. The little monk followed the crowd surging down the street into the Coliseum. He saw the gladiators stand before the emperor and say, "We who are about to die salute you." Then he realized these men were going to fight to the death for the entertainment of the crowd. He cried out, "In the name of Christ, stop!"

As the games began, he pushed his way through the crowd, climbed over the wall, and dropped to the floor of the arena. When the crowd saw this tiny figure rushing to the gladiators and saying, "In the name of Christ, stop!" They thought it was part of the show and began laughing.

When they realized it wasn't, the laughter turned to anger. As he was pleading with the gladiators to stop, one of them plunged a sword into his body. He fell to the sand. As he was dying, his last words were, "In the name of Christ, stop."

Then a strange thing happened. The gladiators stood looking at the tiny figure lying there. A hush fell over the Coliseum. Way up in the upper rows, a man stood and made his way to the exit. Others began to follow. In dead silence, everyone left the Coliseum.

The year was A.D, 391, and that was the last battle to the death between gladiators in the Coliseum. Never again in the great stadium did men kill each other for the entertainment of the crowd, all because of one tiny voice that could be heard above the tumult.

One voice-one life-that spoke the truth in God's name.

II. Conduct worthy of the gospel of Christ requires courage in the community.

- A. The Philippian Christians were urged to be as one man.
 - a. Challenged to stand firm.
 - b. An aggressive rather than defensive or passive posture (contend for the gospel.)
- B. Courage is the intention.
 - a. "Not in any way terrified by your adversaries."
 - b. Which is proof of our faith.
- C. Knowing that suffering cannot be avoided.
 - a. Struggle and suffering were part of Christ's life.
 - b. Struggle and suffering are a part of the Christian's life.

John 13:34-35

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. [35] By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

III. Conduct worthy of the Gospel implies something about our personal behavior toward other individuals.

- A. Notice the foundations of Christian behavior.
 - a. United in Christ.
 - b. Love.
 - c. Fellowship with the Holy Spirit.
- B. Some characteristics of this behavior are internal:
 - a. Like-mindedness – not robot-like conformity-intentionally working through our differences.
 - b. Selfishness and conceit are out of place
 - c. The interests of other Christians are recognized and honored.

*Two men observed a sign on a car window: “For Sale – 260-724-1000.”

One of them turned to the other and asked, “Are you interested?”

“Of course not,” his friend replied. “What would I need another telephone number for?”

All this talk about worthy conduct could be missed if we focus inaccurately.

IV. A life worthy of the gospel has to do with life as the church.

- A. It is not a casual concern.
 - a. Salvation is not taken lightly.
 - b. “Work out your situation with fear and trembling.”
- B. Live a pure life, different from a crooked and perverse generation.
 - a. Do everything without complaining and arguing.
 - b. Shine like the stars.

*A star is bright even though surrounded by millions of miles of darkness. The Christian life is similar. Our focus on Christ shines through both good and bad times.

Conclusion: Evelyn Underhill said that a Christian should be like a sheepdog. When the shepherd wants him to do something, he lies down at his feet, looks intently into the shepherd's eyes, and listens without budging until he has understood the mind of his master. Then he jumps to his feet and runs to do it. And at no moment does the dog stop wagging its tail.

A life worthy of the Gospel is a challenge to us all. It is a possibility set for us in the Word of God. Let us commit to such a life without protest and with courage. Always, let us do it with joy.

Let us live what we say we believe!