**BCM Bible Study: February 6/7, 2019**

**Philippians 1:27-2:11: Imitate Christ**

Two weeks ago, we introduced the theme of **devotion** and last week we talked about how a servant mindset impacted Paul’s actions and attitude. Tonight, Paul will turn to the reader (us!) and give an exhortation to imitate the perfect servant of God: Christ.

A Life Worthy of the Gospel: **Read Philippians 1:27-30**

* Living “worthy of the gospel of Christ” may sound like we are supposed to earn God’s love. In other words, we can unconsciously interpret this verse to mean, “If I can prove myself worthy enough, I can earn Christ’s love.” This is not a good interpretation, because it does not align with the rest of Scripture! Instead, think about the same phrasing in this sentence: “I want to live a life worthy of my parents’ love.”
  + Assuming the unconditional love of a parent, what does that sentence mean?
* The phrase that begins this section (“let your manner of life be worthy”) contains a Greek verb that has to do with citizenship. Therefore, it could be translated: “Only, behave as **citizens** worthy…” Philippians were proud of their Roman citizenship and the rights and privileges that entailed, so Paul seems to be using that imagery to make his appeal. The noun form of this verb appears in one other location in this letter: **Read Phil. 3:17-21**.
  + From both of these passages, what is Paul asking the Philippians to do when he tells them to act as citizens worthy of the gospel?
  + How does further experiencing God’s love draw you into this sort of life?
    - NOTE: We will reflect more on heavenly citizenship vs. worldly citizenship when we study chapter 3, but your conversation may naturally go there.
* It is clear from these verses the Philippians are facing some kind of hardship. What does Paul say is necessary not only to endure but to actively engage in spreading the gospel?
  + NOTE: What I have in mind is **unity**. You might also say **tenacity in suffering**, which is based on the eternal hope of the gospel.
* With these things in mind, let’s look at the next set of verses.

Christ’s Example and Our Inheritance: **Read Philippians 2:1-11**

* Christian love will result in **unity**. From vv. 1-2, why should Christians be unified? What is the source(s) of our unification?
  + Take a look back at **Philippians 1:9-11**. Recall that we talked about the difference between Christian love and worldly love. Why will Christian love, upheld by true knowledge and discernment, result in *true* unity?
  + Why does the world’s love often result in *false* unity?
  + Why is unity so important for both the witness of the church and its own spiritual vitality? What does Christian disunity communicate to a non-believing world?
    - When the church lives in disunity, a severe spiritual problem exists. When we live at odds with one another, we are ultimately being judgmental and unforgiving. By contrast, Christ offers lavish forgiveness and a verdict of “not guilty” before God, the only one who can judge. When we cannot get past our own differences, we are not living “in the Spirit” (v.1) and our actions do not communicate the gospel to the world. Christ loved us while we were still his enemies (Rom. 5:10), and so he calls us to love our enemies (Matt. 5:44), much less the members of the body of Christ!
  + When do you tend to be at odds with other people? What issues are difficult for you to forgive and overlook?
  + **Read Matthew 5:21-24**. What would it look like for you to seek reconciliation and practice forgiveness?
* Living in such a way – perpetually forgiving and seeking unity – feels impossible sometimes. We live in the midst of sinful people who are prone to annoy and even wrong us! According to Paul, what is the key to living in such a manner? (vv.3-11)
  + **Humility** is the way to unity. How does Christ’s example show us how to live humbly? (vv.3-4)
  + What would it look like for you to practice this kind of humility? (Encourage people to be specific!)
* In addition to being an exhortation to imitate Christ’s humility and selflessness, verses 6-11 is one of the greatest statements about Jesus in all of Scripture!
  + Walk through the verses carefully, what do you learn about the nature of Jesus from this passage?
    - NOTE: I recommend reading the NIV for these verses because of its translation that Christ is the “very nature” of God. (v.6) The ESV translates this as “form” and the footnote explains what this means: “‘Form’ here means the true and exact nature of something, possessing all characteristics and qualities of something.” The same word for ‘form’ is used in the phrase ‘form of a servant.’ (v.7) Jesus is the *exact nature* of God.
  + The church has long affirmed that Jesus is both God and man - this is definitely a mystery in many ways. But don’t miss the point of the passage: Christ has taken the form (note the definition above) of a servant, and he is our example as we aim to serve God.
    - How does the example of Jesus encourage you to dedicate your life to God’s purposes?
    - Do you sense that there is something that you need to start/stop doing?