

Worthy of the Gospel

TRANSCRIPT (AUTO-GENERATED)

The only worthy Christian is an unworthy Christian. The only worthy Christian is an unworthy Christian. The Bible says that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

The only worthy Christian is an unworthy Christian. You can never say to God, I think I've done enough. I think I'm good enough.

I think I can come before a holy God, the perfect God, and show them my perfect life. No one can do that. The only worthy Christian is an unworthy Christian.

The only Christian who can get to go to heaven and the new earth is a person who believes Jesus Christ has paid for their sin. Amen. He came, lived a perfect life that we could never live to die for our sin, and he rose again from the grave.

And the Bible says if we put faith in him and repent of our sins, we will be saved. And we will live forever. But not because we were worthy.

In fact, it's because we were unworthy and we recognized that. So what does Paul mean when he says in today's text to live our lives in a manner worthy of the Gospel? How do you do that when we're all so unworthy?

I want to suggest that the only true Christian is an unworthy, worthy Christian. And unworthily worthy Christianity involves four things we find in today's text. Firstly, it involves unity in humility.

Unity in humility. Paul writes, 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 the one spirit.

Paul is in prison. We are pretty confident he's in prison in Rome, not somewhere else, but he's probably in prison in Rome. He planted this church some years ago, the church in Philippi.

It's a church he deeply loves. It's a church that he is proud of. He admires their joy in the Lord, their generosity, their love for one another.

He has sent this letter that's in our hands today. Via Epaphroditus, a messenger, and Epaphroditus has taken the letter back to Philippi, and Paul is writing this to encourage them and strengthen them.

As Leanne said, we're doing morning and evening service sermons different. We're working our way through the text of Philippians.

So last week was just before this passage, and there was this powerful line that Paul says, For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. And now he says, whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ.

Paul is writing back to this church that he really is very fond of from prison. And he says, Come what may, guys, come what may, anything could happen in life. Life will be filled with challenges, you know that.

But I charge you in the name of Jesus to live a life worthy of the Gospel. Live in a manner worthy, and also die in a manner worthy of Jesus.

If we are to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy, then it stands to reason that we can conduct ourselves in a manner unworthy. Paul says he wants to see his beloved church standing firm in the one spirit, that is unity in humility, I think.

I think once you recognize all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and I'm one of those sinners, and that I need a Saviour, and there's nothing that I could do to make me worthy, other than being a person who Christ died for.

That's what makes me worthy. There's nothing that I've done. It's what Christ has done for me, amen.

So we do have worth as shown by what Christ has done for me. While I was still a sinner, Christ showed His love for me and told me what my worth was, because He was willing to die for me. But that drives me to humility, doesn't it?

Not pride. So I think Paul is saying to this beloved church, the Philippian Church, I want to see unity in humility. Unworthy living is disunity and pride.

It's the opposite of unity in humility. It's disunity and pride. Disunity and pride go together, I think.

Because if I think that I'm better than you, somehow I think I'm more worthy of maybe God's love, or I'm more worthy of success and whatever attributes a human strives for, I'm more worthy of it than you, I immediately create a gap between us

vertically. I'm up higher and you're down there, and that disintegrates and breaks apart unity, fellowship, community. Tim Keller once said, Pride is the carbon monoxide of sin. It silently and slowly kills you without you even knowing.

It's so true. Most sins, you know, they're happening. If you steal something, it's hard to do that without knowing.

Or some horrible things like committing adultery. You know that if you manifest in some violent anger, you know, but you know, pride sneaks up on us amidst the favor of God sometimes, doesn't it? Think of the kings of Israel.

Pride in a church is yuck. I'm not going to ask you to raise your hand, but you ever been in a church where there are some powerful figures who have fallen victim of pride?

A prideful church or people in a church that are filled with pride, creates disunity, it must. We are called to live with humility in unity, because we know that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

That means that when we're together as Christians, we are very interested in the plank in our eyes. Amen. We're very interested in looking in the mirror and seeing planks and saying to God humbly, Lord, would you help me?

Could you take this plank out of my eye? And maybe just when the time is right, I could gently and carefully point out some specs in other people's eyes.

There is a blessing to be had when the church lives in the humility that we need, because we are unworthy. You know, Tim Keller also said this about humility. I love this description.

Humility is thinking about yourself less. It's not thinking less of yourself, per se. But just thinking about yourself less.

Try it when we have a cup of tea. Try thinking about the other person more than you're thinking about you. It's the essence of humility, just starting self-forgetfulness.

I think it's what Jesus is talking about when he says, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. He's saying, get used to being good so that you don't even remember it. Just be a person who is generous.

Sometimes I think it's true that we can pray in ways where we don't forget ourselves enough. And a prayer like this looks like, Lord, help me to get out of the way. I don't want this to be about me.

Help me to get out of the way. I want it to be about you because I don't want it to be about me. I would suggest maybe just don't even worry about you.

Just pray for God's glory. Unworthy, worthy Christianity involves unity in humility. Our worth comes from being unworthy, amen?

And it also involves unworthy, worthy Christianity involves courageous commitment. Paul writes, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you.

The Christians in Philippi remember what we read about in Acts 16 last week in this service, and what the kids' skit was pointing out to us. Paul, when he went there and planted the church, he faced some real persecution.

He was properly flogged like my son, Lockie was flogged by one of the kids at the front. Paul is writing to a church who know what's at stake. They know that there are challenges.

That's why Paul writes, whatever happens, come what may. Whatever happens, you are going to need, church in Philippi, courageous commitment to strive together for the Gospel without fear. The Greek word for striving together is sunathlaeo.

What is the word you hear in athlaeo there? Anybody? Athlaeo?

Athlete. Be like the athlete. It's the same word Paul uses in 2 Timothy 2.5, where he says an athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.

Paul is saying to the church, that Philippi and the church at NorthernLife, keep passionately, intentionally giving yourself to the promotion of the Gospel.

Make an effort, no matter what, don't back down like an athlete trains for the race and puts themselves through a rigorous training schedule. This is worth it, giving your life to the proclamation of the Gospel in word and deed.

Because the Gospel changes people. It really does. It is the power of God under salvation for all who would believe.

And it doesn't just change people. Think about it. The Gospel changes family lines, generations.

Not only that, it changes communities. Remember when we looked at Jesus the Game Changer and Carl Fahy's looked at the impact of Christianity over 2000 years? It has significantly impacted this whole world.

That's what it does. And that's why it matters. We can get used to the Gospel.

But Paul is saying to us, walk with courageous commitment without fear. Last week, I was preaching at night on this great line, to me, for to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

And I quoted a very inspiring, soberingly inspiring text from a Rwandan man who was martyred in 1985. He wrote this down the night before he died.

He said, I am finished and done with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, chintzy giving, and dwarfed goals.

I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of adversity, negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity. Courageous commitment.

Humility, in unity, and courageous commitment. One of the fellowship highlights for me, honestly, for the last 30 years of ministry, I'm pretty thankful to the Lord that I've been in ministry now for about 30 years.

One of the highlights for me is what happens every Monday night in our garage. Up to 12 men, only 11. There's 12 that might come, but the biggest we've had is 11.

Lift weights together. I mentioned this a few months ago. It's a highlight not only of my week, but of my life.

Highlight of my life. Watching a bunch of men courageously step under heavy weight. And we remember regularly that physical training is of some value, but training for godliness has value in all things.

And it's just a metaphor. It's a good thing. With health and fitness, it's a good thing.

But more important is men building relationships where iron sharpens iron. Where you can have a funny situation like one of the guys a few weeks ago, he was about to go for a PB, a personal best, and this one rep maximum of something.

So it's a heavy weight. He's taking, it's courageous of him to step under it. And all of a sudden, everyone else, it's a single garage area.

So it's small. There's ten men that turn around and they all stand around him. This is Lockie.

And he's like, we don't have to watch. Go on with your training. And it was like, no, no, come on, mate, let's do it.

Of course, he lifted more than he's ever lifted. Why? Because there's this unity in humility with courageous commitment.

We're in it together. The Gospel is far more important than bench pressing some amount of weight.

But the challenge to us is, because none of us deserve the relationship with God, we can in all humility band together to tell the world this great news that someone has died for their sin and there's a life worth living for his glory. Amen.

Unworthily worthy Christianity involves unity in humility, courageous commitment and undeniable plausibility. Paul writes, this is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved and that by God. A strange text.

Strange text. What's Paul meaning?

Well, he's probably referring to those people at Philippi who were doing the beating, those people at Philippi who were really doing the persecuting and Paul is saying that unworthily worthy Christianity will win through love over hate.

Genuine Christianity in response to this harsh treatment. Like, what are they going to do? Fight back?

Well, I think he's saying, if you respond as Christ responded to his persecutors, that testimony will speak to the conscience of the offender and challenge them with the conviction that God is just and will judge their sin at the appropriate time.

Unworthy, worthy Christianity speaks loudly with undeniable plausibility. What do we mean by that? I think sometimes, I really mean this, we should put a sign out there on our digital sign.

We help people believe again in the church. And that's not a typo, I mean that. I know, of course, we believe in Jesus.

But some of you and some of you online are struggling to believe in the church. Is that fair to say? Jesus is easier to believe in.

He's amazing. The church, his body, so, so, sometimes doesn't feel like that.

But we want to be a church like the church of Philippi, who could say to the world, our Lord Jesus once said 2,000 years ago, they, the world, will know that we are Christians by our love for one another, by the undeniable plausibility of the way we

live our lives as unworthily worthy Christians. Not prideful as though we're better than anyone else, but humbly pointing to Christ as our Savior and treating one another with love those who are very different to us, but treating them the way Jesus

would have us treat them. Undeniable plausibility. How many of us came to Christ because of God's grace? We know that, but I've heard so many people testify over the years.

I knew this Christian. I'd known some Christians who seemed to be fake. They seem to be a bit hypocritical, but I met a Christian who I couldn't deny that their life was different.

That's undeniable plausibility. Because when someone's a spiritual seeker, and you might be one here today, you're looking for the real deal, aren't you? You're like, I don't want religion.

I want a real relationship with God. Someone point me in the right direction. Someone give me an example of plausibility.

Broken, yes, not perfect, but filled with grace and changing, becoming a different person from the inside out. It's a powerful testimony. Can I ask you this question?

Is your life growing in its example of undeniable plausibility? As you interact with the people you have been given in your life, maybe it's a spouse. Maybe it's your kids, your family, friends, neighbours, work colleagues, clients.

They're looking at you and they know you're a Christian. That's what we're called to do and be. Paul says, you know, there are some people who are treating you very harshly.

I encourage you in Jesus' name, love them back and allow the judgment of God to come on them and the grace of God, but leave them over to God and His will.

No matter what is happening, no matter what, may we live our lives with this undeniable plausibility by the grace of God.

Unworthily worthy Christians live with unity and humility, courageous commitment, undeniable plausibility, and they live with cross-shaped lives.

The text finishes verse 29, For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him. Since you were going through the same struggles you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

When Jesus called Paul, his name was Saul, on the road to Damascus. Do you remember what Jesus said to him, among other things? He said, I must show you how much you need to suffer for my name.

He might have said that to one of the other disciples, but that's what Jesus said. This man is going to have to carry his own cross. Only the Apostle John, we understand, died a ripe old age.

Everyone else was martyred. When Jesus was teaching his disciples, and they were building this sense of bravado, they were with God's man. They were with the Messiah.

A very powerful figure, the saviour of the world. They were starting to get some confidence, and then Jesus would bring them back to earth, and he'd say, if you're going to follow me, you're going to carry a cross also.

There's going to be a shape, a cruciform look about your life, cross-shaped lives. Now, for some of us, we're going through a pretty tough life at the moment, this season, and you might think, really? Why?

Life's tough enough. What is there? Some cross I have to pick up as well?

Like, why? Why does it have to be so tough? Why does there need to be a cross to bear?

It's a very good question. I think the answer is at the heart of the undeniable plausibility piece in Christianity. Faith in Christ is for everyone, the poor, the rich, those in pain, those having a season of success.

But it's for everyone, and everyone shares in suffering at some point. When God demonstrated once and for all that He was willing to become human and suffer on a Roman cross, brutally be murdered in our place, what did He say about suffering?

He said once and for all, I am not indifferent to your suffering, amen? I'm not indifferent in an ivory tower to your suffering. I am gonna come and be part of it because it's part of this thing called free will.

You want free will, there's gonna be suffering. After the resurrection in the new earth, there is no power of contrary choice, there's no more suffering, the two go together. You have free will, there's going to be suffering.

Christ has demonstrated for us the way and the way of the master involves a cross shaped existence. Not that we die for anyone's sins, but there's this sense that as we suffer, we point people to the one who suffered once and for all. Amen.

Tonight, Lord Willing, Ben is preaching on one of the greatest passages in the Bible. It really is. Philippians 2, 5 to 11.

Where we're told that our attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. He was united with his father, yet he chose to not consider equality with God, something to be grasped.

He gave that up and then in a united way, he was humble, came to earth, courageously followed the path of commitment all the way to the cross.

And because he obediently offered himself to die on the cross, the lamb slain, the father has given him the name above every other name. Suffering and victory are together at the cross.

And suffering and victory are part of the journey that we walk as followers of Jesus. When we suffer in our lives, and we trust God for the outcome, mysteriously we echo the story of the cross. What do you reckon?

Is that a fair statement? We reverberate the power of Christ, not living in an ivory tower, but being amongst the throng of real life, experiencing real suffering. We're not outside of it.

Christians are never drawn to leave the world. But in the world, we give this example of undeniable plausibility.

And a lot of that example is found in how we respond through God's grace and his empowering and his peace and his joy in the midst of suffering.

In a profoundly powerful way, authentic Christianity shines most brightly when it is demonstrated in the midst of suffering. Unworthily worthy Christianity involves cross-shaped living.

So what are you living through right now that is taking you to your limit? But you know deep down, a time will come when God will use what you have walked through as a testimony to point people to Jesus. That's what 2 Corinthians 1 says.

God's going to give you comfort in the midst of your unique challenge, your suffering, so that with the comfort He gave you, you will comfort others. That's the point of suffering. It is redemptive.

It points us to Christ and it points others to Christ. Can I encourage you in Jesus' name? Hold on, because the Gospel has suffering right next to victory.

That's the Gospel, suffering right next to victory. It has been granted to you on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him.

The only worthy Christian is an unworthy Christian who feels completely unworthy of God's love, completely unworthy of His grace and empowering. If that's you, you are exactly where you need to be to live a life worthy of the Gospel. Hallelujah.

Because the only worthy Christian is an unworthy Christian. So to live a life worthy, to come back to what this is all about, how, what does it mean to live a life worthy of the Gospel? I think it's to stay in a place of feeling unworthy.

And in that point, all my glory, all my thanks, all my gratitude to the one who made me worthy. By God's grace, may we at NorthernLife serve the Lord with unity, in humility, really, in Jesus' name.

Courageous commitment, undeniable plausibility, and through cross-shaped living, giving all the glory to God.

Lord Jesus, we look forward to hearing the words of Philippians 2, 5 to 11 that so incredibly describe what you did that earned the name above every other name.

We know you walked the path of suffering, and you lived a life filled with joy and blessed happiness as well. For the joy set before you, you went to the cross, enduring its shame, and it allowed you to sit down at the right hand of the Father.

So we give you all the glory for what you're doing in our church at NorthernLife. We pray in your name, Lord Jesus, that you would shape us however you want, that we might be a church you're proud of. In the name, above every other name.

Amen.