*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

September 14 - 19

Philippians

**Monday, September 14 Philippians 1:27-30**

*“Conduct yourselves in a worthy manner”*

 Just as Paul has conducted himself in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ despite opposition both from outside and from within the Christian community, so Paul urges the Philippians to cope with the problem of persecution and dissension in a way consistent with the gospel. It is probably the case that their fellow citizens who are not believers felt that participation in a Jewish sect was incompatible with being a good citizen of Philippi. Although the temptation may be strong to compromise with those who oppose them, their first consideration should be loyalty to the standards of heaven’s kingdom, not concession to earthly kingdoms.

 If the Philippians are to do this they must present a united front against their opposition. Further, they should not fear their opponents for the outcome of their persecution is their own destruction. They may seem strong, but God is stronger. Another reason not to fear the persecution they are experiencing is that it is a sign of their salvation. That they are hated for their faith confirms Jesus’ words that the world will hate his followers.

*May my conduct honor you, Lord, when I am opposed for being your disciple. Amen.*

**Tuesday, September 15 Philippians 2:1-4**

*“Working together with one mind and purpose”*

 Paul turns from the problem of withstanding persecution from the outside to healing the wounds of strife within the Philippian church itself. If the Philippians are going to participate successfully with him in their struggle against opposition to the gospel, they must be unified in mind, love, and soul and must humbly place the interests of their fellow believers above their own. Paul is here showing that the struggle to live the gospel in the world is directly related to living the gospel’s call to unity in the church.

 Paul is not imagining the church being made up of people walking in lockstep with one another. Instead, he sees it as a group of individuals who, despite their differences, are willing to show love for one another by putting the well-being of others first. This will always mean speaking the truth and acting on the truth, and doing so in love. It will also mean having the humility to admit when we have spoken or acted amiss and then to mend our ways.

*As the Spirit has united us with you, Lord, he unites us with one another. Amen.*

**Wednesday, September 16 Philippians 2:5-11**

*“Have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had”*

 Paul has admonished the Philippians to be unified, humble, and unselfish in their relations with one another. Now he gives them the reason: this was the attitude of Christ Jesus. Paul’s concern is not merely with the inner attitudes of individual Philippian believers, but with the concrete expression of their attitudes in their day-to-day encounters with each other. He goes on in verses 6-8 to describe both Christ’s divine status and his willingness not only to empty himself by becoming human but also to humble himself by submitting to a cruel form of death. Here Christ is the focus, and God the Father stays in the background. In verses 9-11, however, the Father takes center stage, and Christ is the recipient of his action.

 The Father responds to the Son’s obedience in two ways: He exalts Jesus to the highest place and he gives to Jesus the name that is above every name, both of which exalt Jesus to a position of recognizable superiority over all creation. As a result, every knee of every created being will bow before him, and every tongue confess his splendid name.

*When we humble ourselves, Lord, you lift us up. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

September 14 - 19

Philippians

**Thursday, September 17 Philippians 2:12-13**

*“God is working in you”*

 Paul now begins to apply the example of Christ’s unselfish humility and obedience to the Philippian situation. His basic meaning is clear: He wants the Philippians to obey as Christ obeyed, and presumable this means to work for unity by avoiding the kind of selfish ambition that leads to dissension. When Paul says that believers must “work out their salvation,” he does not mean that they should work *for* salvation. He means instead that they should conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ as they await the final affirmation of their right standing before God on the day of Christ. They are to do this with fear and trembling because such seriousness is appropriate to the task of living out their commitment to the gospel in a way that demonstrates that they are genuine believers.

 In order for his statement in verse 12 not to be misunderstood as believers somehow being responsible for their own salvation, Paul goes on to explain that salvation comes entirely at God’s initiative and that God provides both the will and the ability to accomplish his good purpose.

*You are at work in us, Lord, bringing about the good fruit of salvation. Amen.*

**Friday, September 18 Philippians 2:14-16a**

*“Live as children of God”*

 Paul follows his general admonition that the Philippian believers strive for unity with a more specific command: They should, he says, stop complaining and arguing. Paul uses the same Greek word for complaining as the Greek translation of the Old Testament uses to describe Israel’s dessert wanderings, where the Israelites “complained” against Moses and Moses made clear to them that their complaining was not as much against him as against God. Paul’s point is not only that the Philippians, although they are Gentiles, constitute part of God’s holy people, but also that as God’s holy people they should learn from the mistakes of their spiritual ancestors.

 The Philippians, he says, should strive for unity in order that they might be “without fault in a crooked and depraved generation.” Here Paul uses the language of Moses from the book of Deuteronomy in which Moses is describing those among the Israelites who were unfaithful to God as being “full of fault, a crooked and depraved generation.” Unlike their ancestors, Paul hopes that they will be a beacon of light for the truth of the gospel amid a faithless world.

*You call us, Lord, to present a unified witness of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

**Saturday, September 19 Philippians 2:16b-18**

 *“Offering faithful service to God”*

 Another reason for the importance of unity among the believers is so that on the day of Christ’s return they may be able to stand “clean and innocent” (verse 15) before God. If this comes to pass, he continues, then his apostolic efforts will not have been in vain. Paul describes these efforts with language drawn from the athletic arena, speaking of his apostolic labors as a race in which he runs and which will result in a prize; in this case the prize is the satisfaction of having been used by God in the lives of the Philippian believers.

 In language that alludes to his death, Paul describes himself as a drink offering that may be poured out, again drawing his imagery from the Old Testament where drink offerings were made to God. Paul views the Philippians’ continued obedience and steadfastness amid persecution as an offering to God equivalent to the offering of his own apostolic labors – labors that may end in his death. Even if it costs him his life, he will rejoice, as should they. For, after all, he will be with Christ (1:21, 23).

*We offer our lives to you, Lord, serving you faithfully. Amen.*