

Conduct Worthy of the Gospel
Be United in Mission
Phil 1: 27-30

Introduction: A code of conduct is a collection of imperatives or guidelines that addresses what is and what is not acceptable behavior. As I reflected on the definition, I began to realize that every group I have personally committed to throughout my life had a code of conduct. Educationally, every school I have ever attended from the elementary to the Doctoral level had a code of conduct. Athletically, every team I have participated on from little league to the collegiate level had a code of conduct. Professionally, every company I have worked for whether profit or not-profit had a code of conduct. Finally, my own family had a code of conduct, there was a certain expectation that came with our last name. Did you know that the gospel of Jesus Christ also has a code of conduct? You see, too many of us preach a gospel where the finish line is accepting Jesus Christ, but I need to tell you that accepting Christ is not the finish line; instead, it is the starting line because the Lord has expectations for His children! The expectation for the child of God is the gospel! Those who commit to follow the Lord Jesus Christ have a responsibility to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ! Therefore, the Gospel has implications. Over the course of the coming weeks I would like to speak to you from the theme “Conduct Worthy of the Gospel of Christ.” Please turn with me in your Bibles to Philippians 1:27-30 as we read together from the sacred text. We will begin this series in Philippians 1:27-30 where the Apostle Paul commands the Philippians to stand fast as one. The title of today’s sermon is “Conduct Worthy of the Gospel of Christ: Be United in Mission.”

Sub-Introduction: This letter written by the Apostle Paul and his companion Timothy is addressed to the church at Philippi, and the most common location for its composition is in Rome around A.D. 61-63

while Paul was there in prison.¹ The most likely pattern of events are as followed: Paul planted the church in Philippi during his second mission trip in A.D. 50; he visited the church again during his third mission trip in A.D. 55; he was detained by the Romans in Jerusalem in A.D. 57; he was held in Caesarea from A.D. 57-59 where he eventually appealed to Caesar and was transferred to Rome in A.D. 60.² During Paul's imprisonment in Rome, the Philippians sent him a gift through the hands of Epaphroditus, and Paul put this letter in hand to return to the church at Philippi (Php 2:25-30; 4:10, 14-20). Paul opens the letter with his typical greeting (Php 1:1-2), offers thanksgiving and prayer on behalf of the Philippians (Php 1:3-11), provides an update on his imprisonment (Php 1:12-18), shares his future convictions (Php 1:19-26), and exhorts them to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel (Php 1:27-2:18).

The purpose for Paul's trip to Jerusalem following his third missionary journey was to provide an offering for the saints, which was collected among the Gentile churches, and when he was seen by a mob of Jews from Asia (modern day Turkey) they accused him of teaching "men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place (referring to the temple)" and for bringing a Greek in the temple (Ac 21:28-29). As the mob attempted to kill Paul, the Roman soldiers intervened, thus saving Paul's life, and placed him in the barracks, but the commander eventually relocated Paul to Caesarea because of the Jews continual plotting to murder him (Ac 21:30 - 23:35). Paul's case was heard by Felix, the governor of Caesarea, and the Jews brought the following false charges against Paul (Ac 24:5-10): 1) Paul was a worldwide trouble maker, stirring up riots; therefore, he was a threat to Rome who desired to maintain control; 2) Paul was the ringleader of the Nazarene

¹Henry H. Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959): p. 617-618.

²*The King James Study Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc., 1988: p. 1844-1845).

sect, a faith divorced from the Jewish religion and it was a new cult, which means it was illegal to practice because Roman law controlled religious practice; 3) Paul attempted to desecrate the temple (note: the Romans had given the Jews permission to execute any Gentile who went inside the barrier of the temple, Ac 21:28; nevertheless, the allegation is false because the mob only accused Paul of bringing a Gentile, Trophimus from Ephesus, inside the temple, which was also false).³ To make matters worse, the Jewish leaders reported to Felix that they seized Paul because of these alleged offenses, thus implying they took him to arrest him and judge him according to their law (Ac 24:6-9), which is false because the mob actually sought to kill Paul before the Roman soldiers intervened (Ac 21:31-32; 26:21)!⁴ Paul argued his case before Felix, emphasizing that the chargers were false (Ac 24:10-13, 17-21): “they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd . . . neither can they prove the things of which they now accuse me” (Ac 24:12-13). Nevertheless, Paul remained bound without cause (Ac 24:22-23), even into the reign of Festus who replaced Felix as Governor of Caesarea (Ac 24: 26-27). Festus also heard Paul’s case before his accusers, but because he desired to do the Jews a favor he attempted to have Paul’s case heard in Jerusalem, the place where his life would be in the greatest danger (Ac 25:1-12); therefore, Paul appealed to Caesar, and Festus granted his request. Paul said,

For if I am an offender or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying, but if there is nothing in these things of which men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar (Ac 25:11)

King Agrippa later visited Festus and heard Paul’s case and also concluded with his wife, Bernice, and others present that Paul had done

³ S. D. Toussaint, “Acts,” *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures 2*, Ed. J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985): 421.

⁴ Ibid.

nothing worthy of death or chains and he would have been released, if he had not appealed to Caesar (Ac 25:13 - 26:32). However, Paul did not make a mistake in appealing to Caesar because the Lord was clearly orchestrating Paul's path to Rome so that he could bear witness before Caesar (Acts 23:11, 27:23-24; Phil 1:17), and Paul knew all along that he was really on trial for the sake of the gospel as the charges were just a cover up to murder both the apostle and the gospel he faithfully proclaimed (Ac 26:19-23). Paul's testimony of the advancement of the gospel in Rome despite being in chains (Php 1:12-26) sets the standard for his chief exhortation to the Philippians in this section of the letter: "Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Php 1:27). This exhortation serves as a transition in the letter as Paul begins to expound on the implications of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Sermon Points:

I. Be United in Mission (v. 27)

²⁷ Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit

Explanation: As Paul shifted from his circumstances (1:12-26) to the Philippians, he had only one thing he wanted the Philippians to do. Μοῦνος (Adverb), translated as "only" brings out this point and the Holman Christian Standard Bible captures its importance by translating it in this way: "Just one thing." "The word introduces an admonition 'lifted like a warning finger', as Barth puts it."⁵ Paul had just one thing for the Philippians, that their conduct be worthy (αξιῶς, an adverb from ἄξιος, meaning 'worthily, in a manner worthy of, suitably'⁶) of the gospel (*Euangelion* (noun), "the good news about Christ"⁷) of Christ. Πολιτενομαι (verb, present, middle or passive) is a Greek word translated as "Let . . . conduct be," and could also be properly translated as "the way in

⁵ P.T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991): 145.

⁶ Ibid., 147.

⁷ I.-J. Loh and E.A. Nida, *A Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1995): p. 38.

which you live,’ ‘how you behave,’ or simply ‘what you do.’”⁸ It means “to live in accordance with the civic duties of one’s state or body politic” (Logos Bible Software Sense). It is translated as “have lived” in Ac 23:1. *Πολιτευομαι* is an “old verb from *πολιτης* [*politēs*], citizen, and that from *πολις* [*polis*], city, to be a citizen, to manage a state’s affairs, to live as a citizen ...”⁹ Paul’s use of this political word, which only appears once in all of his letters, was probably stimulated by the pride of Roman citizenship in the Roman colony of Philippi as the residents of this colony enjoyed the privilege and responsibility of living under the protection of Roman law.¹⁰ However, the Philippians to whom Paul writes possess a dual citizenship because they are also citizens of heaven (Php 3:20). Philippi was proud of their Roman citizenship, but Paul wanted them to be just as proud of their heavenly citizenship by living in a manner worthy of the gospel (Php 2:15). The Philippians understood that even though Philippi was their physical location they were still citizens of Rome. Additionally, Paul wants them to understand that even though earth may be their physical location they were still citizens of heaven; therefore, they were to “live in the way that the good news about Christ says you should live,’ or ‘live in accordance with the demands in the good news about Christ.”¹¹ Paul reminds the Philippians of the prior action of God in their midst and puts forth the gospel as the norm for the Philippians’ conduct.¹² They belonged to a Christian society, whose citizenship was in heaven (Php 3:20); therefore, they were to conduct themselves as such. Paul’s update in 1:12-26 where he testifies that his mission served to *advance the gospel*, even while he was in chains, sets the standard for his challenge to the Philippians *to live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ* in the face of opposition.¹³ Instead

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933): Php 1:27.

¹⁰ G.W. Hansen, *The Pillar New Testament: The Letter to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009): p. 94.

¹¹ Loh & Nida, *A Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 38.

¹² O’Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 148.

¹³ Hansen, *The Pillar New Testament*, 93.

of a long list of regulations, Paul presents the person of Jesus Christ, the exalted Lord of all who humbled himself and was obedient unto death on a cross; therefore, the gospel of Christ provides the purpose and the pattern for all Christian conduct.¹⁴

The purposeful clause “so that” provides the purpose for Paul’s command. Paul commands them to let their conduct be worthy of the gospel so that whether he came and saw them or remained absent and heard of them, he would know their affairs that they “stand fast” in one spirit (*pneuma* (noun) = spirit, the sense here is soul). Paul would either visit them and personally inspect their walk (Php 1:26) or hear of their affairs via Timothy whom he planned to send (Php 2:19). Paul is holding the Philippians accountable for standing fast as one because he understood that commands without personal accountability does not transform lives.¹⁵ The Greek word *στηκω* translated as “stand fast”, means literally to stand, but the sense is figurative, meaning “to hold one’s ground; maintain a position; be steadfast or upright” (LBSS). Further, to be firmly committed in conviction or belief. “The metaphor could be that of soldiers standing firm in battle or of condemned believers fighting for their lives in a Roman amphitheater (Eph 6:13; 1 Cor 4:9).”¹⁶ The verb is in the active voice (present tense); therefore, the Philippians are to continually carry out the action. “In one spirit” could be expressed as ‘by all intending the same way,’ ‘by all of you having the same goal in mind,’ or ‘by all of you wanting to do the same.’¹⁷ The Philippians are to hold their ground with one goal in mind. “As they are wholly committed to the advance of the gospel, that is, its dynamic onward march, they will walk worthily of the gospel by holding fast to it, preaching and confessing it in spite of opposition and temptation.”¹⁸

¹⁴ Ibid., 93-94.

¹⁵ Ibid., 95.

¹⁶ Loh and Nida, *A Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 39.

¹⁷ Ibid., 39-40.

¹⁸ O’Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 148.

Parallel Text:

Acts 4:32: ³² Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul;

Illustration:

(A)

Marching is organized, uniformed, steady and rhythmic walking that is usually associated with military troops.”¹⁹ Together the unit stands as one man marching to the command of their leader with all movements in sync with each other. Here are some commands, which specify different types of marching:

Quick March: A.K.A, the forward march in the USA. This is an instruction to begin marching at the Quick March speed with the left foot, and the standard pace is 120 beats per minute with a 30-inch step as arm movement is kept to 9 inches to the front and 6 inches to the rear while marching.²⁰

Slow March: This is a ceremonial (i.e., funerals and when a unit's colours are marched out in front of the troops) pace where the feet are kept parallel to the ground and the arms are never used.²¹ “In the United States Marine Corps, arms swing as the distance they normally would in quicktime, but at the same pace as marching. U.S. Marine Color Guards do not swing their arms.”²²

Double March: A moderate jog that produces a travel speed of approximately double that of Quick Time, designed to be used even when carrying heavy burdens.²³ The U.S. command is "**Double Time, MARCH.**"²⁴

Easy March: An unrestricted march at approximately Quick Time and is designed for field marches and other rough terrain, though is

¹⁹Wikipedia, “Marching,” <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marching>

²⁰Wikipedia, “Military step,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_step

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

not used in combat areas.²⁵ The U.S. command is "**Route-step, MARCH.**"²⁶

Mark Time: A stationary march with the knees coming up parallel to the ground or the foot dangling six inches off the ground (US members move the knees upward approximately 6 inches) while maintaining the time of what they were previously marching or implementing Quick March, if no time specified. "This is designed to maintain the time of large parades when portions need no forward speed, but is also used as a common punishment for physical training because of its tiring nature."

Unfortunately, we have members in the body of Christ marching to different commands. Some following the command of the "self-help march." Some following the command of the "prosperity march." Some following the command of the "miracles or signs and wonders march." Some following the command of the "salvation by faith plus works march." Some following the command of "easy belief without repentance." Some following the command of "mark-time march", just marching in place, busy with a lot of activity, but doing nothing of value for the Kingdom! This is because they are taking their orders/ instructions from the wrong authority, and it has led to division! But, the true command that we should be marching to, from the King of kings and the Lord of lords is the "Go and Make Disciples march" (Mt 28:18-20)! This is the command we should be marching to! Every member of the body of Christ must stand as one and march in sync to the command of "Go and Make Disciples!" This is Conduct Worthy of the gospel!

(B)

My wife was a member of Tennessee State University's majorette squad called the "Sophisticated Ladies." As a team, they would put in countless hours of preparation for the Saturday half-time show.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

Daily during football season, they would practice from mid-afternoon until late in the night to make sure all their dance movements were in sync and they would do it until perfection. I remember attending one of her performances at the Georgia Dome when TSU played against Florida A&M University (FAMU). As they entered the field with the band until the time they exited, I watched 10 ladies dance as one to the same song. Not one motion or movement was out of sync with the others. In the same way, every member within the local church must stand together as one. Together, each member must move in sync with one another as you dance to the same tune, which is the gospel of Christ. This is Conduct Worthy of the gospel!

Application: If you are not a follower of Christ, I want you to know that God loves you and He sent Christ Jesus to die in your place, thus paying the penalty for your sin. And God raised Jesus Christ from the dead three days later, thus accepting His sacrifice and proving that Jesus Christ had power over death! The Bible says “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Ro 3:23) and “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Ro 6:23). Therefore, without Christ you will perish in a place the Bible calls hell because of your sin. Today, when I give the invitation I want to encourage you to respond to Jesus Christ by turning from your sin and placing your faith in Him. You will not only receive the gift of heaven, life with God forever, but you will become a member of the family of God! The universal church is the company of those who have been regenerated (born again, given new life) via their repentance from sin and their acceptance of Christ’s redemptive work on the cross, which is also called the body of Christ because it is the organism through which He gives spiritual life and manifests the fullness of His power and grace.²⁷ And you can make the First Baptist Church of Woodstock your local church because it is God’s

²⁷ A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1907): p. 888.

plan for every believer to be connected with a local church where they can be united in accomplishing His purposes. Through Christ, you will be able to unite with this redeemed, yet imperfect family who is still being transformed into the image of Christ day by day! You will gain new friends, and some will become even closer to you than your own blood relatives. Through Christ, you will become a member of this family, you will be able to unite with us.

If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, I want to encourage you to daily surrender control of yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ so that you can live in a manner worthy of the gospel, especially in uniting with your local church. You cannot live in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ without dying daily to self and allowing the Lord Jesus to reign in your heart! You cannot live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ without being engaged in meaningful Christ-centered, gospel-driven, and grace-oriented community with the body of Christ! You see, your repentance and profession of faith in Christ automatically gave you a membership into the universal church of Christ, the body of Christ, the awesome company of individuals who have been saved by Christ and are indwelt by His presence (Eph. 1:22, 23), regenerate persons from all times and ages in heaven and on earth (Mt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22, 23; 3:10; 5:24, 5:25; Col. 1:18; Heb. 12:23), but your repentance and profession of faith in Christ did not automatically give you a membership with a local church, which consists of a smaller company of regenerate persons from a local community who voluntarily unite themselves under Christ's authority, the Head of the church, and in accordance with the Word of God for the purpose of expanding His kingdom in themselves and in the world.²⁸ I need to inform you today, in the event you were not aware, it is also God's plan for you to select under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and be committed to a local church where you regularly attend, participate, and stand united with the redeemed family God in the accomplishment of His purposes and for the

²⁸ Ibid., 887, 888, & 890.

benefit of your personal growth and development in your walk with Christ. Therefore, you need to die to yourself, allow Christ to reign in your heart, and be intentional about engaging in regular and meaningful gospel community with the context of a local church where you stand together as one, holding your ground with one common purpose, as citizens of heaven, which is your civic duty. Do not neglect or disengage from being united with your family in Christ. Do not promote or condone discord or disunity; instead, strive for unity so that your local church can display the glorious and transformative power of the gospel to both our neighbors and the nations. Attend worship so that you can gather with the family as they lift-up the King, join a small group/ Sunday school class or discipleship group where you can have deeper community, serve alongside your brothers and sisters in the work of the Kingdom, and both embrace and participate in the vision God has given the church with all your heart. God has not called you to isolation, but to community. And God has not called you to division within the context of Christian community, but unity.

A. In Gospel Ministry

with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,

Explanation: Paul expanded upon what he means by “stand fast in one spirit.” He says with “one mind,” which is essentially equivalent with “one spirit” (Ψυχη) and can be expressed as “having the same attitude or the same orientation of will” the Philippians were to be “striving together for the faith of the gospel.”²⁹ The Greek word translated as “striving together” is *συναθλεω* (participle (verbal adj), present, active, plural, nom., masc.), and the sense is to struggle alongside another or others; conceived of as competing alongside of another or others” (LBSS). It is translated as "labored with" in Ph 4:3. This participle explains positively (*συναθλοῦντες*, ‘contending,

²⁹ O’Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 150.

struggling’) what Paul means by “stand fast” (στήκετε). Stand fast (στήκετε) is the main verb on which the participle “striving together” (συναθλεω) depends.³⁰ Notice the voice is active (present tense); therefore, the subject (the Philippians) were to carry out the action of “striving together” and as a participle the action is designed to be contemporaneous with the action of the main verb to “stand fast”. This means the Philippians were to stand fast as one while at the same time striving together for the faith of the gospel. “Paul’s image of striving together with one soul conveys the ideal of such unity among Christians that they are no longer striving as separate individuals but striving together as one person.”³¹ *Pistis* (noun) is the Greek word translated as “faith” and “the gospel” is the good news about the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. “The Philippians are to stand united in their struggle for the cause of the faith—its spread and growth, the same goal that was set before all of Paul’s work.”³² “When Christians focus on proclaiming the gospel and living by the truth of the gospel, they will be soul-mates, *striving together with one soul*.”³³

Parallel Text:

Matthew 28:18-20: And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.” Amen.

Mark 16:15: And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Hansen, *Pillar New Testament*, 97.

³² O’Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 152.

³³ Hansen, *Pillar New Testament*, 98.

Luke 24:46-48: Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ And you are witnesses of these things.

John 20:21: ²¹ So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.”

Acts 1:8: But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Illustration: At the conclusion of game four of the 2014-2015 Eastern Conference Finals between the Cleveland Cavaliers and the Atlanta Hawks, I saw the camera focus in on a Cavs fan holding a sign up that read “**TEAMWORK MAKES THE DREAM WORK.**” I watched the entire series, and I personally believe the sign adequately captured the performance of the Cavs. It was not only the stellar performance of LeBron James who averaged 30 points, 11 rebounds, and 9 assists per game against the Hawks, but it was also the contributions made by Kyrie Irvin, Matt Dellavedova, JR Smith, Iman Shumpert, Tristan Thompson, James Jones, and Timofey Mozgov that ultimately led to them being crowned as the Eastern Conference Champions. As a team, the Cleveland Cavaliers were striving together for one common goal, which was to be the Eastern Conference Champions and represent the east in the NBA finals. In the same way, every member of this local church must strive together for one common goal, which is the gospel of Christ. Together, each of you must work for the gospel of Christ; therefore, everyone must contribute to both its confirmation and defense. This is Conduct Worthy of the gospel!

Application: If you are not a follower of Christ, I want you to know that you can join a mission that is bigger than yourself

and has eternal value. When you place your faith in Christ, you not only receive the promise of eternal life, but you can unite with the local church, the family of God, in its endeavor to make disciples of all the nations! God will work through you to bring others into saving faith in Jesus Christ and to aid them into developing into fully devoted followers of Christ. You will become a co-laborer with God and the family of God in taking the gospel to every creature! There is no greater privilege! God is recruiting you and you are a five-star recruit!

If you are a follower of Christ, you must hold your ground with your local church in your struggling alongside every member for the faith of the gospel because this is conduct worthy of the gospel! I will say it again, you cannot live in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ without dying daily to self and allowing the Lord Jesus to reign in your heart! You cannot live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ without being engaged in meaningful Christ-centered, gospel-driven, and grace-oriented community with the body of Christ! Therefore, you need to die to yourself, allow Christ to reign in your heart, engage in Christian community in the context of your local church, and contend “as one man” with your church for the gospel! You must advance the gospel amongst your family and friends by taking advantage of the opportunity to have gospel conversations when you gather with them during birthday parties, holiday gatherings, and other special occasions. These are great opportunities for extensive gospel conversations. You should begin now regularly praying for your family members, praying for God to capture and transform their hearts through His gospel as you and others share with them. As it relates to your immediate family, teach your spouse and kids the gospel. Take ownership of making disciples in your home. You must advance the gospel amongst your neighbors by intentionally engaging them. Introduce yourself to them, ask how you can pray for them, invite them in your home for a meal and share

your testimony with them. Be intentional! Begin now prayer walking your community and asking God to capture your street and your subdivision with the power of the Gospel! You must take the gospel to your co-workers. Get to know them, serve them, ask how you can pray for them, and invite them to lunch so that you can share your testimony with them. Begin now prayer walking your job and asking the Lord to capture and transform hearts with the gospel. Ask God to give you gospel opportunities and to lead you through the workplace. As people come to faith in Christ, don't stop there; instead, begin to disciple them by teaching them how to obey Christ's commands. Pour your life in them. Own your friends, own your relatives, own your associates, and own your neighbors, say to yourself "That is my mission field and I am going to own my part in God's redemptive plan by standing as one with my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ in striving together for the spread of the gospel in our personal mission fields!"

B. In Gospel Hostility (vs.28-30)

²⁸ and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God. ²⁹ For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, ³⁰ having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.

Explanation: Paul expanded further upon what he means by "stand fast as one." The Philippians were to stand fast in one spirit, in one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel and not in any way terrified by their adversaries. The Greek word translated as "terrified" and preceded by the adverb not is *πτωρω* (participle (verbal adj), present, passive, plural, nom., masc.), and the sense is "to be made timid or fearful" (LBSS). This participle explains negatively (*μη πτωρόμενοι*, 'in no way intimidated') what Paul means by "stand fast" (*στήκετε*). Again, "stand fast" (*στήκετε*) is the main verb, on which the participle depends and to which the relative clause of v. 28b,

ἥτις ἐστὶν ('which is') points back.³⁴ The word "terrified" (*πυρω*) could denote the uncontrollable stampede of startled horses.³⁵ The voice of the participle is passive, which means the subject is pictured as being acted upon. However, it is stated in the negative so it is something the Philippians must not allow to be acted upon them. "The Philippians' opponents tried to throw them into a panic or to strike terror into their hearts. If, however, the believers stand firm as a congregation, one in heart and mind, then at no point (ἐν μηδενὶ; cf. 2 Cor. 6:3; 7:9; Jas. 1:4) should they be intimidated by their adversaries."³⁶ The Philippians were not to allow their outside opponents to instill fear within them while struggling alongside one another for the faith of the gospel. "The church was to have an unflinchable steadfastness, even in the midst of persecution. Whoever the opponents were at this point, they were not to intimidate the Philippians."³⁷ "The Philippians are to present a united and unwavering front against the attacks of the enemy in their conflict for the gospel."³⁸

The Philippians suffering on behalf of Christ (holding their ground and striving alongside one another for the faith of the gospel and not in any way terrified by the opposition) would produce an effect, proof of their adversaries' destruction (*απωλεια* (noun)) and the Philippians salvation (*σωτηρια* (noun)) from God. *Απωλεια* translated as "perdition" in 2 Pe 3:7 speaks to the destruction that one experiences, which is annihilation on the day of Judgement. The non-Christian community "would know of their destruction and the believers' salvation. . . The fact, then, that the Philippians could stand firm in the face of adversity proved their relationship to the Lord . . . the inner strength to live and die for what the Philippians

³⁴ O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 150.

³⁵ Ibid., 152-153.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ R.R. Melick, *New American Commentary: Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* 32 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991): p. 90.

³⁸ O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 151.

believed. Such strength had to come from God himself, not from mere human resources.”³⁹

For it had been granted (χαρίζομαι (verb, aorist, passive) to the Philippians on behalf of Christ to not only believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake. Χαρίζομαι translated here as “it has been granted” means in this context to give something as a sign of one’s beneficent goodwill toward someone” (LBSS). It is the same word used in Php 2:9 where Paul said God has “*given* Him”, referring to Jesus Christ, the name above every name. The word is translated as “having forgiven” in Col 2:13 where Paul said, “He has made alive together with Him, *having forgiven* you all trespasses.” Just as God graciously gave Jesus the name above every name for His humility and obedience on the cross, God has also graciously given suffering to His followers via persecution, which is ultimately for a good purpose in God’s grand plan. Just as God has graciously granted us forgiveness for all of our trespasses, God has also graciously given suffering to His followers via persecution, which is ultimately for a good purpose in God’s grand plan. The verb is in the passive voice (χαρίζομαι), which means the subject is pictured as being acted upon. “Benoit puts it well: ‘It is God who sends the persecutions they must undergo, the solid resistance with which they must confront them, and the assurance of salvation which follows.’”⁴⁰ “Suffering on behalf of Christ, just as much as believing in Christ, is a gift of God’s grace.”⁴¹

Paul expanded further, “*having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.*” “The Philippian Christians may now be facing the same kind of opposition that Paul himself experienced when he was with them, that is, from pagan neighbours, perhaps even from authorities.”⁴² Besides the

³⁹ Melick, *New American Commentary*, 91.

⁴⁰ O’Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 157.

⁴¹ Hansen, *Pillar New Testament*, 102.

⁴² O’Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 153.

suffering the Philippians heard about in Paul's current imprisonment, they witnessed the suffering he experienced during his first missionary journey to Philippi (1 Thess 2:2). During his time in Philippi, both Paul and Silas were arrested for a commanding a spirit of divination to come out of a slave girl (Acts 16:16-19). Paul and Silas were eventually beaten and thrown into prison (Acts 16:20-24), and through a miraculous event the jailer and his entire household were eventually led to faith in Christ (Acts 16:25-34). This shameful mistreatment of Paul and Silas was solely due to their ministry success, which stirred up the enmity of the people (Acts 16:9–40; 1 Thess. 2:2).”⁴³ As a result, “Paul and Silas at length left this city. . .”⁴⁴

Parallel Text

2 Timothy 1:7-8: ⁷ For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.⁸ Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God.

Matthew 10:28: ²⁸ And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Jude 1:3: Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

Illustration:

(A)

“Courage is not the absence of fear; it is the mastery of it.”⁴⁵

⁴³ M. G. Easton, *Easton's Bible dictionary* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1893).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ P.L. Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc., 1996): p. 283.

(B)

“A faith that is not worth dying for is hardly worth living for.

(C)

“Courage consists not in blindly overlooking danger, but in seeing and conquering it.” —Jean Paul Richter⁴⁶

(D)

The Civil Rights Movement from 1954-1968 was no stranger to opposition. The objective was to end racial segregation and discrimination against black Americans in the United States, especially in the south. However, supporters of the movement often faced harsh treatment, unlawful imprisonment, beatings, murders, and more. But one of the deadliest acts of violence to take place during the Civil Rights movement was the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama on September 15, 1963 (53 years ago), which previously served as a central meeting place and staging ground for Civil Rights activities. As the church made preparations for the annual Youth Day celebrations a bomb exploded in the stairwell of the church killing four girls and injuring dozens of others in the assembly. This cowardly attack was designed to stall the progression of the Civil Rights movement; nevertheless, it had the opposite effect, as the movement was strengthened through additional support and propelled forward. You see, together they stood against the opposition and persevered under harsh treatment and as a result, today blacks and along with other ethnicities reap the fruit of their labor. Today, blacks share equal rights along with white counterparts; therefore, blacks can be presidents, run companies, own businesses, vote, live in nice communities, pursue additional education at the best universities, and more. As a black man, I am very grateful that they stood fast as one, struggled together in the advancement of

⁴⁶ H.H. Hobbs, *My Favorite Illustrations* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1990): p. 68.

their cause while remaining unterrified by their opponents because if they had not then neither myself nor my family would enjoy the freedoms I do today. In the same way, every member of this local church must stand together, strive together for the faith of the gospel and not be terrified by the opposition because if you do, then many will be able to experience the freedom that is available in Christ! This is Conduct Worthy of the gospel!

Application: If you are not a follower of Christ, I want to encourage you not to be afraid to become a follower of Christ. You may be afraid of experiencing isolation from family, friends, and co-workers because of your decision to follow Jesus Christ. You may be afraid of being threatened by family, friends, co-workers, or radical groups because of your decision to follow Jesus Christ. But I want you to know something, when you come to Christ you will not only receive the gift of eternal life, but a local church family to stand with you through whatever persecution awaits you. God does not will for you to experience such plights alone, but with the family of God to encourage and comfort you through it all. God graces His followers with persecution and He uses it ultimately for their own good as He forms Christ in them (Ro 8:28-29). So, know that one of the beauties of walking with Christ is that whatever He allows through the filter of your life, He will work it ultimately towards your good. Therefore, do not fear my friend. Come to Jesus Christ!

If you are a Christ follower, then you must hold your ground together with your church, struggling alongside every member for the faith of the gospel and unterrified by the opposition. I will say it a third time, you cannot live in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ without dying daily to self and allowing the Lord Jesus to reign in your heart! You cannot live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ without being engaged in meaningful Christ-centered, gospel-driven, and grace-oriented

community with the body of Christ! Therefore, you need to die to yourself, allow Christ to reign in your heart, engage in Christian community in the context of your local church, contend “as one man” with your church for the gospel all while being unterrified by the opposition. America continues to drift further away from the truth of God’s Word and Christians face increasing persecution, and you will falter under this increasing hostility if you try to stand in your own strength, which is their intent to make you afraid and ashamed of the gospel of Christ, but if you root your life in Christ and in meaningful Christian community then you will be able to stand against the opposition! I am NOT trying to convince you of the need to muster up your own courage and strength in the face of opposition, but I am trying to inform you of the strength that God has already made available to you in Christ and in meaningful community for you to endure persecution like a good soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ! You must persevere and like soldiers on a battlefield, you must not yield an inch no matter how hard your opponents press against you. This hostility is designed to destroy and divide the local church. You must not be intimidated as you stand in Christ connected to the body of Christ, no matter how powerful the opposition, nothing should shake your resolve as you stand firmly planted in Christ. Whether you experience hostility from family, friends, co-workers, employers, or neighbors do not run, do not hide from any battle, do not back down from any attack, do not compromise, and do not concede. Stand for Jesus Christ! And when you experience suffering because of your Christian witness, remember that God has graciously given you that suffering and it is designed to draw you closer to God and it is also a mechanism that God intends to use to form Christ in you and bring glory to Himself through your faithful witness as you endure it (Ro 8:28-30). This is a proof of your salvation and that from God and of your enemies perdition, if they do not get right with God. Boldly stand for Jesus Christ!

Conclusion: You must hold fast to the proposition to conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel, to be united in mission, in gospel ministry and in gospel hostility. Together as a body of believers, Christ followers, you must stand as one, striving for the gospel, and unmoved by the opposition. I lovingly encourage you all to respond to this appeal to the glory of God. Amen!