

Conduct Worthy Of The Gospel

Introduction. The Philippian church was the first one established on European soil. Preachers went there in response to the Macedonian call (Acts 16:9-12). They lingered in the city for some time and learned that some women were accustomed to meet by the riverside. They joined them in worshipping God and the result of that contact was the preaching of the gospel to Lydia and her household. They were converted and these few individuals became the nucleus of the Philippian church.

The Philippian jailer and his household were soon added to the number as were others when the power of God had its effect. Paul stayed with the church and established it. He then journeyed southward through Amphipolis and Apollonia to Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and as far south as Corinth. After a while, during his imprisonment, Paul wrote to the Philippians a short, heartfelt letter. In many ways, it was one of the most mature churches in the New Testament. In Philippians 1:27-28, Paul's wonderful statement will be the subject of our study.

I. **General Observations Concerning Our Conduct**

A. A definition of the word "conduct."

1. The KJV translates this word as "conversation." In the Greek, it literally means "manner of life" or "behavior as citizens."
2. To those in Philippi, this word would have a special meaning.
 - a) Philippi was a Roman colony (Acts 16:12, 20-21). Most of its citizens were transplanted citizens of Rome. They were very community conscious.
 - b) So although they were living in Philippi, they were expected to "behave as citizens" of Rome.
 - c) Paul used the word to speak of one's duty to a body or group of which one is a member, and to the head of that group to whom he is responsible.
3. Paul applies this term to the life of a Christian.
 - a) He used the noun form in Philippians 3:20. The Philippian saints were exhorted to recognize their position as citizens of a heavenly kingdom.
 - b) Because of the privileged position they occupied, they were to realize their responsibility to obey his exhortation.

B. Our behavior as citizens is to be worthy of the gospel.

1. This implies that there is behavior that is not worthy of the gospel!
2. Acting unworthy of the gospel will bring shame upon it.
 - a) This is the same as an American citizen who misbehaves in a foreign country. The inappropriate action sheds a bad reflection on his home country.

- b) The apostle Peter brought to our remembrance the importance of proper conduct as we sojourn here in a country not our own (1 Peter 2:11-12).
 - 3. There are two ways in which we can behave in an unworthy manner.
 - a) We can commit sins of commission. These are sins where we do something that we are not commanded to do (Psalm 19:7-11).
 - b) We can commit sins of omission. These are sins where we fail to do something that we are commanded to do (James 4:17).
 - (1) The religion of Jesus Christ is not simply to be good, but to do good (Galatians 6:10; Titus 2:14).
 - (2) It is an aggressive and progressive sentiment which starts in the heart and finds expression in obedience (James 1:25).
 - 4. There is no outside power on earth able to hinder the onward march and the progress of the church (Romans 8:35-39). It will live or die according to what those on the inside do. Therefore, we must live with the utmost integrity in every facet of life.
- C. Our behavior as citizens is to be worthy with or without the presence of other Christians.
 - 1. Paul said, "whether I come and see you, or else be absent." He evidently did not want their faith to be simply an "environmental" faith.
 - 2. An "environmental" faith is one dependent upon surroundings.
 - a) For example, remaining faithful while under the positive influences of one's home, friends, or congregation. When they are removed from the environment, their faith is lost.
 - b) What are some signs of an "environmental" faith?
 - (1) Praying in public, but not in private.
 - (2) Studying the Bible when at worship assemblies, but not in private.
 - (3) A lack of closeness and dependence upon God and Christ.
 - 3. Paul's hope was that the Philippians' "behavior as citizens" was not dependent upon his presence. Our behavior should be dependent upon the presence of Christ alone!
 - 4. Our manner of life should always elevate the church in the eyes of the world.
 - a) The church's greatest testimony before the world is spiritual integrity. When the unsaved look at the church and do not see holiness, purity, and virtue, there appears to be no reason to believe the gospel.
 - b) We must make the world realize that the church of our Lord Jesus Christ stands for something. It is God's institution and the King of this kingdom will reign over the destiny of all mankind.

II. ***Specific Observations Concerning Our Conduct***

A. It involves standing firm in one spirit.

1. "Behaving as citizens" involves "standing firm" against whatever would defeat us (1 Corinthians 15:58; Colossians 1:23).
 - a) The lure of the world in which we live, with its immorality and materialism (1 John 2:16).
 - b) The sin of unbelief, which can strike at even the most mature Christians, during times of doubt (Hebrews 4:6, 11).
 - c) The deceitfulness of false doctrines which show great promise but lead us away from Christ (Jude 3-4).
2. Note also that we must stand fast "in one spirit."
 - a) We are not to stand strong by ourselves, but in unity (Psalm 133:1; Mark 3:24; Ephesians 4:1-3; 2 Corinthians 13:11).
 - (1) The keynote of success is the accomplishment of every member working together as a solid unit (Colossians 2:2; James 3:17-18; 1 Peter 3:18).
 - (2) "Striving" refers to an athletic contest in which a group of athletes cooperate as a team against another team (Philippians 4:3). They work in perfect coordination against a common opposition.
 - (a) More than one athletic team with many outstanding players has failed to win a game because they concentrated on their own success.
 - (b) Do we not see the need for identifying with a congregation and closely working together with them (Acts 9:26)?
 - (c) Are those who drift around from congregation to congregation, never identifying with any group truly behaving worthy of the gospel?
 - (3) In recent years, the appeals which were spoken to our denominational friends must now be directly applied to our own brethren.
 - b) Our common opposition is against the devil (Ephesians 6:12; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5). Unworthy conduct usually begins when we neglect the advantages of fellowship and togetherness.

B. It involves with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.

1. Striving together not only advances the faith of the gospel but also halts the advance of whatever opposes it.
2. We do not strive for some new idea or some modern philosophy. We do not strive for some unique theory or for something speculative in nature.
3. Tragically, evangelism today seeks to remove the offense of preaching on sin and repentance in an effort to make the message more

acceptable. This "trivialized gospel" is often packaged in various forms of amusement and entertainment.

- C. It involves not being disturbed by your opponents.
 - 1. Christians walking in a manner worthy of the gospel will not be troubled by those who may ridicule or even persecute them.
 - a) The world may consider such "fearlessness" as evidence that we are crazy.
 - b) However, such courage is actually evidence of our salvation (Matthew 5:10-12).
 - 2. There may come a time when Christians again must suffer for His sake.
 - a) This was the case with Paul, and evidently the Philippians as well (Galatians 6:17; Colossians 1:24).
 - b) Should we ever have to suffer for Christ, it will be our privilege (Acts 5:41-42).
 - 3. Those characters whose have adorned the pages of history have first been men and women of conviction, second of courage and third of faith. They neither doubted nor were afraid of any adversary, and they moved the gospel message forward.

Conclusion. To all of us who love the truth, we must buckle on God's armor afresh today, unsheathe and raise high the sword dipped in the blood of the Son of God, and march faithfully on under the leadership of Him who has never yet lost a single conflict. In the end, when life is over and its battles fought and its victories won, He will bid us to lay aside our armor on the plains of eternity, hang our swords on the walls of that great city while we sweep through the gates into the beauties and grandeurs that surpass all understanding. Will you be a part of this great invitation?