

Philippians 1:27-2:4

Paul had been speaking of the privileges that the Christians have in Christ. He now turned to their obligations.

What is the first obligation (v. 27)? *“Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.”* The Greek word for *“conduct”* means being a good citizen—operating in obedience to the laws and customs of the state.

The single Greek word for the phrase “conduct yourselves in a manner worthy” is *politeuesthe*—literally meaning “to live as a citizen.” The use of *politeuesthe* was particularly appropriate as the Philippians took great pride in their Roman citizenship (Acts 16:12, 20-21).

Why would Paul encourage them to be good citizens even while living under the hated Roman oppression? Why not call for civil disobedience? Good behavior as a witness for Christ would ultimately glorify God. Though Roman citizens, the Philippian Christians were also citizens of the more important heavenly kingdom. They needed to stand firm in one spirit while living in two worlds that were at war with one another.

Like the Philippian Christians, we are dual citizens. God is concerned with our behavior and expects us to conduct our lives in a manner worthy of the gospel, while recognizing that the Christian life is a battleground.

Application (v 27-30): For us as Christians, what does “conduct yourselves in a manner worthy” means in the following two scenarios?

- **As a citizen of Rome (fill in your city, state, nation)?** Obey the laws of the state: don’t litter, observe speed limits, etc.; be good citizens.
- **As a citizen of Heaven?** Stand firm morally and spiritually; contending as one man (unity) for the Gospel; no fear; submit to authority (Romans 13).

The Greek word *stekete* translated “stand firm” conveys the idea of steadfastness or the unflinching courage of soldiers refusing to abandon their posts regardless of the heat of battle.

What is the value of unity in the Christian church today?

- **Testimony to the world.** John 13:35: *“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”* In John 17:23 Jesus prayed four times for His disciples, asking the Father that through their unity the world will know the Father sent Him.
- **Necessity in time of war.** There is no place for Lone Ranger Christianity. Christians must draw together against the fallen world’s forces to successfully defend the gospel and advance the claims of Christ.
- **Partnership for the gospel.** Unity among the Body of Christ is necessary so believers can work together carrying out the will of God

Is the church unified as one today? First century Christianity was united—and powerful. Because of our divisiveness along denominational, social, racial and theological lines, the power of the church today is diminished, its effectiveness is diluted and its witness compromised.

What challenges might one face as they strive to live a life worthy of the gospel (vv. 27-29)?

1. Stand firm (v. 27)—united in one spirit against the intimidation of the world. **Who are the Philippian Christians’ adversaries?** It’s unknown but likely enemies outside the church, opposing the work of God. The enemies’ failure to intimidate the believers would be a sign of the church’s final victory.
2. No fear (v. 28)—living with trust and confidence. **What is the value of not being frightened?** Witness and encouragement to other believers. When our spiritual enemies fail to make us afraid, their failure is total because they possess no weapon other than fear and intimidation. By standing strong against the

flesh and the devil, it is evidence of our own salvation—and confirmation to those spiritual enemies of their ultimate, certain destruction. **What are some of the things that create fear within us?** Uncertainty of the future.

3. Expect suffering (v. 29)—don't be terrified of the attacks we face by adversaries—those challenges were ordained by God. God was not abandoning the Philippian Christians. Their present difficulty was a tool in God's hand—not punishment. Suffering for Christ is our birthright, inherited at our second birth.

The Greek word here for "suffer" is *pasko*—used primarily in the sense of persecution. It is also used for suffering: 1) physically, unrelated to persecution (Acts 28:5 and Matthew 17:15); 2) under temptation (Hebrews 2:8); and 3) hardship, in a general sense including struggling with sin and its consequences.

The privilege of suffering for Jesus Christ is a gracious gift from God to all believers. What does suffering look like? Physical and emotional hardship; agony, anguish, temptation; living right as a Christian. Suffering for Christ includes: fasting, leaving home's comforts for the often spiritually dark mission field, turning the other cheek, going the second mile, ministering to others when it's inconvenient, etc.

What are the blessings in Christ Paul calls the Philippians to reflect upon (2:1)? Encouragement, comfort, fellowship, tenderness and compassion.

How should we respond to these blessings (2:2)? Being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose, displaying humility. Note that their response was needed to make Paul's joy complete. The foundation of Paul's joy was the unity and spiritual maturity of the saints at Philippi—not money, acclaim, possessions, etc.

What does being like minded mean? Having the same attitudes, not necessarily opinions. Displaying unity, not uniformity. Willingly working together and serving one another. Paul wanted them to see that selfishness and pride were obstacles to unity.

What was the "antidote" Paul gave us for selfish ambition and vain conceit (2: 3)? In humility, consider others better than ourselves.

How would you define humility? Humility has been described as "insight into one's own insignificance." John Wesley observed that "neither the Romans nor the Greeks had a word for humility." The concept of humility was so foreign and abhorrent to their way of thinking that they had no term to describe it. During the first several centuries of Christianity, humility was considered a pitiable weakness.

What was the principle that Paul was stating in 2:3-4 that is found throughout the New Testament? He was saying that in every way we should view others as worthy of *more consideration* than ourselves—not *better* than ourselves. Unbelievers typically put themselves before others.