

# Conduct in the Church

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[ 0 : 00 ] Philippians chapter 1, beginning in verse 27.

! I am not frightened in anything by your opponents.

This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in Him, but also suffer for His sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

So, if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and in one mind.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

[ 1 : 29 ] May God add a blessing to the reading of His Word. Will you please be seated? One of the most exhilarating times in the life of an elementary school student is when his teacher has to leave the classroom.

You remember those times when you were a student, and you and your other classmates were there in the classroom, and something happened, and your teacher had to leave for a moment. You didn't know how long it was going to be. Maybe she was going to come right back into the room. Maybe she was going to be gone for minutes. Maybe she was going to be gone for the rest of the day. You had no idea.

But it was exhilarating. What's happening? Where's she at? What are we going to do? And, you know, some kids would get the guts to do things that they know that they shouldn't have done, right?

If a teacher has candy on the desk, maybe they'd sneak up and grab something. But it was an exhilarating time, if you remember. I remember in high school, it was seventh hour, freshman year, and the last class of the day was a Spanish class that I had, and I had it with a lot of my friends.

[ 2 : 43 ] And our poor Spanish teacher, we drove that poor lady crazy. And she was very afraid of leaving and giving us a substitute, and rightfully so, because I'll never forget one time we did have a substitute, and this poor lady had very bad eyesight.

She had Coke bottle glasses, and not only could she not see what we were doing, but we managed to convince her, this was the day that we were supposed to take a test, that our teacher let us take tests in groups.

And so, needless to say, when my teacher came back, we were in a lot of trouble. And you guys know that old saying, when the cat's away, the mice will play.

Maybe as a parent, you've experienced a similar kind of apprehension whenever you left your kids for the first time with a babysitter. And you came back, and you asked them, the babysitter, how it went.

And you know, the babysitter gave you one of those knowing looks, like, it didn't go so well. Don't call me again, kind of a look. And so, if you can relate to those things, which I think you can, then you can probably relate a little bit to, I think, what the Apostle Paul is experiencing here.

[ 3 : 58 ] He's a little bit apprehensive with regard to the Philippian church. Now, from what we know through Scripture, that the church in Philippi was actually a pretty good church.

They were generous. They were a loving congregation. They certainly weren't perfect. No church is. They had their issues. But to this point, they had remained committed to the gospel and to its advancement in the world.

So, here's Paul, and he's apprehensive. And what he's really apprehensive about, I don't think, is so much them, but Satan. Knowing that, though this church was a good church, that Satan operates in

such a way to try to bring disunity, to try to create problems.

And so, he knew in his absence, Satan was going to attack, as he always seeks to attack the church of Jesus Christ. So, they needed to be encouraged to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, which had saved them.

This portion of Scripture, here beginning in verse 27, and then going through chapter 2, verse 4, as we read, gets to the heart of the need for the church to conduct itself in a way that God has designed.

[ 5 : 15 ] And so, here, Paul's going to direct our focus to our conduct within the church. We've been talking about what it means to live the good life. That basically, to live the good life, it means that our focus is on Christ and not ourselves.

That we are living Christ-centered lives instead of self-centered lives. And so, now, having brought us through that and helping us to understand that truth, Paul is going to show us, here, in this next portion of Scripture, how we should conduct ourselves as followers of Jesus Christ in the church.

So, in the first paragraph, verses 27 through 30, Paul emphasizes the need of the Philippians to be tough and courageous as they stood against external opposition.

And then, in the second paragraph, verses 1 through 4, Paul emphasizes the need for the Philippians to be tender and to be loving towards one another. One commentator called this passage the John Wayne passage, and I like that.

Because John Wayne, if you remember in his movies, he was often portrayed as this tough man who withstood evil, but he was also tender and loving to those who needed to receive it.

[ 6 : 30 ] And so, if that helps you to have in mind what this passage, what it's trying to get through is thinking of John Wayne, then, you know, so be it. Right? Pilgrim? Isn't that what he would call people?

Which is fitting with Thanksgiving. Both paragraphs emphasize the importance for the church to be united in its cause, united in our cause, and also supportive of one another as we are fighting for the good fight, as we are striving together for the Lord.

This is achieved when members of the church are living, as Paul writes, in a manner that is worthy of the gospel. Well, what does he mean by that?

How do we live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ? Well, it means that believers are called not just to make statements about the gospel with their lips, but they are to live out the gospel with their lives.

And an easy way to understand that is what we say to each other. You practice what you preach. How do we live a life worthy of the gospel? Well, we practice what we preach.

[ 7 : 42 ] We put into practice the very things that we proclaim to be true about our salvation in Jesus Christ. The gospel is about love, as we see in John 3, 16.

Therefore, we should be known as a loving people. The gospel is about joy. Therefore, we should be characterized and known as a joyful people.

The gospel is about forgiveness. Therefore, we should be known as a forgiving people. The gospel is about truth. Therefore, we should be known as people who speak truth.

The gospel is about humility. Therefore, we should be known for our humble character. The gospel is about life. Therefore, we are to be people who know, who are known for what it means to live this new life that we have been given in Jesus Christ.

Living our lives in a manner worthy of the gospel requires us to keep the gospel central. Now, how do we do that? Well, as we saw last week, it means dying to self.

[ 8 : 52 ] It means dying to self. And as again, we saw last week, that means when we die to ourselves, that we become more like Jesus. Again, we're seeking to be Christ-centered, so that means we're thinking more like Jesus.

We're talking more like Jesus, and we're living more like Jesus Christ. And so Paul is pressing this message into the hearts of the Philippian believers, that the gospel should shape the way they live, and it should shape the way that they conduct themselves in this world.

Look again at verse 27 with me in your Bible. I read out of the ESV, which says, only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel. Some of you might have a King James Version, and it says, only let your conversation be as it is, becometh to the gospel of Christ.

The NIV and the NASB translate that, whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. And then the CSB, or the Holman Christian Standard Bible, translates as this,

as citizens of heaven, live your life worthy of the gospel of Christ.

And I think the CSB really helps us to understand the point that Paul was trying to make of what it means to live in a manner worthy of Christ. It means to understand that we are citizens of heaven here on planet Earth.

[ 10 : 26 ] In the Greek, is that word that we are seeing different understandings or translations to. And what it means is, or short, the beginning of that word means city.

And it refers in early times to the city-states whose inhabitants gave their primary allegiance to that city-state. The verb carries the idea of being a good citizen whose conduct brings honor to the city. So in today's day, we might say something like, I'm a law-abiding citizen. I pay my taxes, right? I do what I need to do in order to be a productive citizen, and that brings honor to my city, to my state, to my country.

The city of Philippi enjoyed the prestige of being a Roman colony. This gave the citizens of Philippi a highly privileged status.

It gave them rights that few others had, and they were so thankful that they were known as being this closely related to the Roman Empire.

[ 11 : 38 ] This is what you would want during that time. And so they were trying to copy as much as they could the city of Rome and how it conducted itself and how it looked.

Though they were miles apart, they wanted to be known for their Roman connection. And so, if you were a visitor of Philippi, you would go there, and if you'd seen Rome before, you would be there, and you'd be miles away from Rome, but it would make you think that you hadn't left that great city. And so they wanted to mirror the city of Rome. And so this is the point that Paul is trying to press into us here, is that whenever someone visits a Christian congregation, and they observe the way that we conduct ourselves, they should be reminded of the kingdom of God.

So when somebody comes off the street and they come into Highland Park Baptist Church, they should see the way that we conduct ourselves, and it should remind them of the supernatural kingdom of God.

You see, churches are little outposts of the kingdom of God here on planet Earth. Our conduct and our values should display our association with Jesus Christ.

[ 13 : 02 ] I remember a time, a while ago, going to Boston. And in a lot of those major cities, you know that they have a little portion of town which they call Little Italy.

And I remember being in Boston's Little Italy on the north end. And it felt like being in a completely different country. People were speaking a different language.

It seemed like I had left the United States of America, but in fact, I hadn't left. And so that's what it's like for us here is when people come into the church, they feel almost, or should feel almost, as if they've left the world.

And they are seeing people who are conducting themselves in ways that are much different from the way people interact and deal with each other in the world. Philippians chapter 1, verses 27 through chapter 2, verse 4, command Christians to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of their heavenly citizenship.

So this means that we must be united against external opposition to the gospel. And it means also that we must be united internally in our relationships with one another.

[ 14 : 14 ] That we are living humbly with one another. That we are being compassionate towards one another. So we are united against our external opposition to the gospel.

And we are united internally in the love that we have for one another. This week we will focus on the first aspect of that. How we are to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel by being united against external opposition to the gospel.

And then next week we'll focus on how we are to be conducting ourselves as citizens of heaven, being united internally internally in our love and compassion for one another.

Christians who conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel are united against external opposition. If we are living our lives and conducting ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel, that means that we will be united together against external opposition.

Okay. So how are we supposed to do that? What does that look like? What is expected of me? And who is the opposition? Let's answer these questions.

[ 15 : 31 ] Paul uses several illustrations to help us to answer these questions in fact. The first illustration he uses is that of a disciplined athlete who is working together with his team to achieve

the same goal.

The second illustration he uses is that of a disciplined soldier who is working together with his fellow soldiers as a unit to achieve the same goal.

And so both illustrations reveal to us our need to work together as a team. And so we see Christian unity requires teamwork.

It requires teamwork. Verse 27 again, standing firm in one spirit with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.

One spirit. One mind. So the first thing that we must understand is that our unity is to bind us together. The church is not a country club.

[16:36] The church is not a government agency. The church is not a business.

What binds us together isn't our age. Look around. What binds us together isn't our similar economic and social statuses.

What binds us together, the thing that we share is the gospel of Jesus Christ that has saved us. And as a result of that, his indwelling spirit that indwells each of us being followers of Jesus Christ.

And so we are really a lot more like magnets than we are a bag of marbles. We're attracted to one another. We're united to one another because of the gospel and how it has brought us from death to life.

And we're thankful to see that God has done that, not just for us but for others. As soldiers, we are to stand, Paul says, and that in the Greek is *steko* and it's a military term.

[17:48] And it's used in reference to holding one's ground. The term indicates someone who is determined as a soldier to stand his ground, to guard his post, and he is unwilling to give an inch to the enemy.

And then as athletes, we are to be disciplined as well, working together or contending together or laboring together or as the ESV says, striving side by side.

And that word *sinathleo*, you can hear the word *athleo*, is the term, the word that we get, athlete, athletic. So to the Philippians, this might have invoked images of track and field or to the gladiator games that they were used to seeing.

But in contemporary times, the sport or the image that we would compare this to, I think that would be most fitting, is a lineman in football. You know the linemen, those big guys who do a lot of the work and get hardly any of the glory?

They are side by side, and if they're on the offense, they're working in unison, in tandem, to try to advance the ball down the field. And if they're on defense, their goal is obviously the opposite of that.

[19:01] We're going to work together, we're going to work in tandem to keep this from moving any forward. And so that's what Paul is trying to communicate to us here, that we're working as teammates, as athletes, as soldiers, side by side to advance the gospel, to do the work that we've been called to do, requires not just one of us, but all of us working together.

But when someone is out of place, when somebody is not in the right position, it messes up the unity of the church, and it makes us least effective. And so we've got to identify what our spiritual gifts are, and you've got to put those to use in the church.

And you can't be serving somewhere, or you shouldn't be serving somewhere where you are not going to be effective for the Lord in ministry, because that's not your spiritual calling, that's not your spiritual gifting. But there is a place for you, and you've got to work to find that place.

And if people are playing out of position, then it disrupts the unity of the team. And I remember being in college, I had two good buddies. One was a shorter guy, and he was a point guard for the basketball team.

The other guy was a baseball player like me, he was about 6'4", 6'5", and he had played high school basketball as well. And so these guys, they loved to play three-on-three pickup games in the evening at school.

[20:29] And so they always struggled to find a third man. So guess who they would come and ask? Little old me. Will you be our third guy? And here's the thing, I like playing basketball.

I hated playing basketball with those two guys. You know why? Because the one guy, obviously he's shorter, he's a point guard, he's a ball handler, I can't do that, he's gifted, he should play that position.

But our tall guy liked to shoot threes. And so guess who got to play down in the post? 165 pounds, going up against guys who were 250 or more?

Me. And so I would get tossed around. I would come back being covered in sweat and half of it wasn't mine. It was the guy that I was guarding. It was disgusting and I didn't like it.

And we didn't do very well because I'm not a post player in that context. So you've got to understand that you've been gifted by God and you've got to put those gifts to use but you've got to put them to use in the right place.

[ 21 : 29 ] And if not, it affects our unity. Teamwork requires each person doing their part. You might not get much glory when you're playing on the offensive line, but guess what?

You can't win football games without the offensive line. You will get destroyed. We advance the gospel side by side. We do that by working together, by contending together, by laboring together as we fight the good fight together.

Now what are we standing firm against? Who is our opposition? Well, let's look at Ephesians chapter 6 verses 10 through 13 together. Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

Put on the full armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against the flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand the evil day, and having done all, stand firm. So who is the opposition?

[ 22 : 40 ] Well, Satan. The opposition is also the flesh, our sin nature. The opposition is also the world, the world system that Satan has created, that Satan has divided, that is in opposition to the church, to the truth of Jesus Christ.

I was saddened to read an article this past week from Focus on the Family, and I know the kids are with us, but that article said that an eight-year-old is the average age when a kid will first come across explicit material, and you know what I mean.

Now, nobody should be looking at that stuff, yet alone an eight-year-old, and in fact, I heard another report before that that said that the age was seven. That breaks my heart.

My son is six. I hope it breaks your heart too. We live in a fallen, sinful world. Satan, from the very beginning, has sought to cause us to exchange the truth of God for a lie.

From the very beginning, he has sought to do this. He has sought to cause us to redefine what is good by defining what is good as being bad, and defining what is bad as being good.

[ 24 : 04 ] And so our job in the church is to stand against such foolishness. And to do so, we aren't to act in violent ways. We're not seeking to repay evil for evil, but we will and should be committed to speaking the truth and being unwavering from it, no matter what it might cost us personally.

One of the worst things that can happen, as we see in scripture, is for God to give a person or a people what they want when they turn from him.

Let's look in Romans chapter one, and I want to read verses 18 through 32. And it's on the screen, but if you want to follow in your Bible, I'll be reading for quite a bit, because this is God's word, and it says exactly, it explains exactly the types of times that we're living in.

Romans chapter one, beginning in verse 18. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world, and the things that have been made, so they are without excuse.

[ 25 : 26 ] For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

Therefore, God gave them up in the lust of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator who is blessed forever.

Amen. For this reason, God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature. And the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another.

Men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.

They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness.

[ 26 : 43 ] They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

Though they knew God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, get this, they not only do them, but they give approval to those who practice them.

Does this not characterize the world in which we now live? And so you need, you see the need for us to stand firm against such evil.

By calling what is evil, evil. And refusing to call it good. And pointing people to the good news of Jesus Christ. Is this battle difficult?

Yes. It is a difficult battle. Does it seem like we're outnumbered? Absolutely. It seems like we are outnumbered. So what should we do?

[ 27 : 41 ] Well, let's pause and take a few moments for application. Here's the first thing that you should do. Remember that you are in the battle.

You are in the battle. Now, what kind of images come to your mind when you think of a Christian? I think for a lot of people, when they think of a Christian, they think of somebody who is uptight.

Somebody who wears suits and ties. Somebody who wears socks with their sandals, right? Bland and boring. Christians are no such thing.

How did Paul just describe us? As soldiers and as athletes. He's describing us as warriors. Many people don't view Christians as that way.

Many Christians don't view themselves in that way. But let's again, let's reflect on Paul's view of Christians. Being soldiers of the king. And determined athletes.

[ 28 : 43 ] He uses images to denote warfare. To denote our need to be persevering. To work as a team and to be tenacious. As we do that.

Christians are tough people. And Christians need to fight in this battle. There are no spectators in this fight.

You're in it. And if you're a Christian, you are called to fight the good fight. Secondly, realize that we don't fight this battle alone.

There are no lone wolves in the church. Or at least there should not be. Jesus constantly compared us to a flock of sheep. And sheep are dumb.

And sheep need each other. Because they're practically defenseless. And they need to be huddled together. And they need to be close to the shepherd. And so do we. That's where we gain our strength.

[ 29 : 44 ] We need to stay close together. We need to stick to one another. As we look to the shepherd for our guiding and directing. So this means that there's no free agents in the church.

There are no secret agents in the church. We are to be a unit. We are to be a part of the team of what's going on. That means that we need your prayers. We need you to give.

We need you to give encouragement. We need you to invest and to support the ministries that you see going on. Thirdly, refrain from fighting against believers whom you should be fighting alongside of.

Now this was an issue in Philippi. And we'll get there when we get to chapter 4. We'll see that something happened. We don't know what. But something happened between two women in the church that was causing the church to swerve off mission.

We can't allow that to happen. And so we've got to understand that there are some battles that just aren't worth fighting because the consequences aren't worth experiencing.

[ 30 : 50 ] We are to work together. We aren't always going to agree. We know that won't happen. But it doesn't mean that we sever or seek to sever that relationship or pull each other apart for minor disagreements.

So here's what Christianity, Christian unity, excuse me, should or will result with. Firstly, we see Christian unity results with courageous actions. Courageous actions.

When we conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel by being united against external opposition, it will result in courageous actions that will advance the kingdom of God. The first is that

we will not be frightened by our opponents.

We will be courageous. One of the most famous battles in all of history is the Battle of Thermopylae that took place in 480 B.C. And I'm sure that you've heard of it or you've seen movies written about it.

And basically what was happening is an alliance of Greek city-states who was led by King Leonidas of Sparta fought against the mighty Persian army who was advancing southward. And they met them at Thermopylae in the central location of Greece.

[ 32 : 04 ] And the Greeks were vastly outnumbered by the Persians. Yet this small force, whose core group was Leonidas and his 300 Spartans, were able to block the path, block the road for three days against one of the mightiest armies that the world has ever seen.

So likewise, these Philipians were outnumbered. They felt it. They have, or they certainly would have felt as we do today that the odds were stacked against them.

But they understood that they were being called to stand courageously against these external forces that they were facing. And they were able to do this. Why?

Because they had a greater king than Leonidas, whom they served. They had King Jesus. And they knew that the battle was raging, but that the war had already been won.

And here's the thing about Jesus. Jesus Christ was not a weak man. Was he gentle? Absolutely.

[ 33 : 19 ] Perfectly gentle. Was he loving? Absolutely. Perfectly loving. But he was not some weak, mild, passive individual that a lot of people have mistook in him to be.

He was the son, right, of God, but his stepfather on earth was a carpenter. And you guess what Jesus would have been doing as a young boy and a young man?

Working in that shop. And have you ever shook the hands of a man who is a carpenter by trade?

It's like shaking a block of sandpaper. Their hands are so tough.

Their hands are so coarse. And I imagine that Jesus' hands were the exact same way. Jesus is no wimp. Jesus is no weakling.

Jesus was the son of God who came to purchase salvation for his people. And he did so willingly.

[ 34 : 18 ] Jesus is the greatest warrior king who ever lived. At the right time, the rightful king of the universe invaded human history and nothing would ever be the same.

He came in the flesh and he did so to set his people free. To break the power of sin and death. To deliver the crushing blow to the head of Satan to set the captives free.

Like I love that verse that we sing today. He put death to death. I don't know if it was exactly that way but you know what I'm saying. It was a great line. He was beaten.

He was spiked. He was slaughtered. He was nailed to a splintered cross. He gave his life for his people that they might have life.

He died for our sins. He took our place. And then, amazingly, this great warrior king came back to life three days after he had taken his last breath.

[ 35 : 35 ] His tomb erupted with more life than was earthly possible. the victim of the cross was revealed to be the victor over every power on earth, under the earth, or in heaven.

The death that seemed like a triumph of darkness turned out to be the dawning of light. And through the resurrection, God reduced every ruler and authority, power and dominion, into mere footstools for the feet of Christ Jesus, our King.

So then, what do we have to fear? What do we have to fear? Matthew 10, 28-33.

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny and are not one and not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your father?

But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore. You are of more value than many sparrows. So everyone who acknowledges me before men I will acknowledge before my father who is in heaven.

[ 37 : 02 ] But whoever denies me before men I will also deny before my father who is in heaven. I love the saying and I don't know who said it but I'm sure it was some great wise soul who said that one man with God is a majority.

One person with God is a majority. The world is a difficult place for us to live in. A lot of times we come in this place and I know that we feel whipped. We feel whipped by the week that we had.

We are feeling already defeated by the week that is to come and the things that are taking part in it. And so we've got to constantly remind ourselves every morning when we wake up I am a son or

daughter of the king.

And though I may not know what today holds or tomorrow I know that I am held by one who holds all things in his hands and that one day this great warrior king of mine who has set me free from sin and death will set me free from this life and I will experience life with him like I could never experience it here.

That gives you courage. That gives you joy. And if it doesn't today then maybe it's because you haven't lain hold of it. You haven't been praying.

[ 38 : 30 ] You haven't been reading your bible. Why do we say that this is so important so that you can receive that good news that you need to be reminded of daily so that you are reminded and have a refresh for you every day that I am a child of the king who is victorious and I belong to him and I can take whatever this world has to throw at me.

The second action we see and I've got to sum up very quickly because we're out of time is that we gladly suffer for the sake of Jesus Christ. We're courageous we do not fear and we gladly suffer for Jesus Christ.

Why do we do that? Because our suffering identifies us with him and it gives us assurance that we belong to him because other people see us and they're reminded of him and if they want to put us to shame if they want to even put us to death we rejoice knowing that we have been closely so closely identified with the one who secured our salvation.

So now let's live in a manner worthy of the gospel together. Let's stand against external opposition. Let's be determined to speak the truth in love no matter the cost and stand with those who do the same.

Thank you.