

Christian Conduct *Philippians 1:27-2:4*

Good morning.

The Greek word which is translated as “*conduct*” means “to live as a citizen.”

According to the US Army Human Resources Command webpage, the Army Good Conduct Medal was established in June 1941.

It is awarded for excellent behavior, efficiency, and fidelity in active Federal military service.

It is awarded on a selective basis to Soldiers who distinguish themselves by their excellent conduct, efficiency, and fidelity throughout a specified period of continuous, active, service.

There is no right or entitlement to the medal until the immediate commander has approved the award.

Please open your Bibles to *Philippians 1*, as we continue in our verse-by-verse study of Paul’s Epistle to the Church at Philippi.

Last time, we studied how the Apostle Paul discussed motives while preaching.

We learned that most commentators think Paul was specifically referring to the Judaizers.

The Judaizers believed that a Gentile had to become a Jewish proselyte to Judaism first, to be circumcised, follow the other Mosaic Laws, and then they could come to Christ for salvation.

Paul had a **single-minded** goal to get the message of Christ preached so, he saw his enemies preaching with wrong motives, as another opportunity for the Gospel to be proclaimed.

Paul wanted to magnify Christ with his whole being, even with his body, which he demonstrated in his walk with Christ.

Paul enjoyed the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ and the supply from the Church so, he was not put to shame. Christ was magnified through Paul, as he lived for Christ.

Paul was confident that no matter what happened, whether he lived or died, either way, was gain for him. Paul believed the Christian life is a win-win situation.

Philippians 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

As Jim Elliott famously said, “*He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.*”

And now this morning, the portion of ***Philippians*** we find ourselves in, communicates how Christians should ***conduct*** themselves as citizens of heaven, while here on Earth.

I. Ambassadors for Christ.

Read ***Philippians 1:27***

This sounds similar to what Paul said in another Prison Epistle.

Ephesians 4:1, I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,

Warren Wiersbe said, “*The Christian life is not a playground, it is a battleground.*” (Warren Wiersbe)

We are sons in the family, enjoying the fellowship of the gospel, we are servants sharing in the furtherance of the gospel, but we are also soldiers defending the faith of the gospel.”

(Again) The word **conduct** (politeuomai/poly-too-o-my) means *to be a citizen, to administer civil affairs, or to manage the state.*

Paul told the Church at Corinth in ***2 Corinthians 5:18 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,***

2 Corinthians 5:19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 5:20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. NKJV

Paul taught the saints at Philippi that they were serving in a foreign land, representing the King and the Kingdom of heaven.

The King of Heaven has a message that needs to be delivered, and Paul said **believers** in Christ are to deliver that message as though God were pleading through them. ***2 Corinthians 5:20***

Ambassadors speak for the King who sent them into the foreign land where they temporarily reside.

Ambassadors do not speak with their own authority, or with their own opinions. Ambassadors are sent with a message and a mission to represent their home while visiting another land.

Ambassadors are representatives who remember the honor and reputation of their homeland with their **conduct**.

Paul says let your *conduct* be worthy of the *Gospel*.

What is the **Gospel**?

1 Corinthians 15:3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

1 Corinthians 15:4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, NKJV

Jesus died a criminal's death, and the Greek philosophers could not reconcile this as being the truth, for the life of a Messiah.

But there was no doubt Jesus was dead because there were many witnesses to the crucifixion, including family members, disciples, Romans, and even some of His hostile accusers!

Why did the Savior have to die?

Hebrews 9:22 And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. NKJV

Christ died for our sins. Our sins are the reason for the death of Jesus. Not for politics or because of the strife caused by the leadership of that time, Jesus died to save lost sinners.

Notice Paul says, ***according to the Scriptures.*** These truths were foretold with over 300 prophecies of Jesus in the Old Testament.

And notice, ***“He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”***

Paul included this to correct the erroneous teaching of that day about the Resurrection and to affirm the central **importance**, the **physical** Resurrection of Christ has for the Christian faith.

The Resurrection of Christ is the **proof** that Jesus was who He said He was. If Jesus had only died, He would be no different than other religious leaders who have died throughout history.

Here in ***Philippians***, Paul said, ***“I may hear of your affairs”***, basically telling them they were accountable for their actions to him, as their overseer.

What did Paul hope to hear about this church? “That you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind.”

ligonier.org wrote, *“Christian character in the life of a believer is an essential aspect of Christian living and ministry.*

Christ has redeemed His people in order to conform them to His image. The end goal of the work of redemption is the glory of God.

According to Scripture, Christian character includes:

“The pursuit of truth, godliness, righteousness, love, joy, peace, gentleness, kindness, patience, perseverance, meekness, self-control, compassion, thankfulness, forgiveness, contentment, and unity.”

Whether I am with you or apart from you, when I hear about you, I hope to hear that your **conduct** is **worthy of the Gospel**.

Paul was saying, *“I want to hear of the unity you share, standing strong in the same Spirit and having the same mind.”*

Matthew 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. NKJV

Paul also wanted these Christians to be led by the Spirit of God and to remain in the unity of the **faith of the Gospel**.

What is the **faith of the Gospel**?

This use of the word **faith** does not refer to our personal faith, in the sense of trusting God and taking Him at His Word.

This use of the word **faith** means, the essential, historic, truths of the Gospel, found within the Word of God, which all true, Christ-believing Christians, have in common.

Edwin Blum said, *“The faith is the body of truth that very early in the church’s history took on a definite form.”*

Saint Augustine said, “*In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.*”

What are the essential, historical truths of the Gospel, that all true Christ-believing Christians, have in common?

The essential, historic Christian beliefs are the deity of Christ, Jesus being fully God and fully man, the virgin birth of Christ, ...salvation by God’s grace alone through faith in Christ alone, and not by works, the bodily resurrection of Christ, the Gospel, with the fact that man must be born again, and the Holy Trinity.

John Walvoord said, “(Christians) *should have a unity of principle, attitude, and motivation.*”

Unity is important. In ***Philippians 4***, Paul spoke about two women in the Church who were at odds with each other. This division caused others in the church to begin taking sides.

The enemy’s goal is to divide and conquer the Church. Paul said his desire was for Christians to be **unified** with the essentials of the faith while their ***conduct*** was ***worthy of the Gospel***.

After all, Christians are ambassadors for Christ and citizens of heaven and Paul will speak more on that in ***Philippians 3***.

But unity was not the only concern here, there were also problems outside the Church.

II. Behalf of Christ.

Read ***Philippians 1:28-30***

Notice Paul mentions *adversaries* which means, “*Those standing against them.*”

Every true Christian, and every church that truly preaches the Gospel, has adversaries, as well as a main adversary.

Ephesians 6:11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Ephesians 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. NKJV

Even though it may seem as if we are in a struggle against a person, ultimately, our battle is *against principalities*.

1 Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. NKJV

According to Martin, “*terrified* “is a vivid term, denoting the uncontrollable stampede of startled horses.”

The Apostle Paul was saying, “*Don’t panic and remember who you are in Christ, and more importantly remember that God is in control.*”

When Christians stand strong and aren't afraid of our spiritual enemies, it is proof of perdition or destruction to them, however it is proof of our salvation as we trust in the Lord to deliver us.

Paul says it *has been granted to us on behalf of Christ*, not only to believe but to suffer for Him as well. The word *granted* can be translated as **gifted**.

Out of all the gifts we were granted at salvation, this is probably one that most of us would like to give back.

People who teach a false Gospel that does not include suffering, fail to believe the warning, and promise from Jesus.

John 16:33 These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." NKJV

Paul told his protégé Timothy, ***2 Timothy 3:10 But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance,***

2 Timothy 3:11 persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra — what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.

2 Timothy 3:12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. NKJV

Paul wanted Christians to view suffering differently. He wanted believers to know suffering is something God gives as a gift.

A. W. Tozer said, “*God does His deepest work in our darkest hours*”. Jesus said when we suffer for Him, it is a blessing.

Matthew 5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. NKJV

As Christians, we have been counted worthy to suffer with Christ, and because of that fact we will be extremely blessed.

John 15:20 Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.

If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. NKJV

Notice the caveat in *Matthew 5:10*; the ***blessing*** is for those who are persecuted, for **righteousness'** sake.

If we are persecuted because of our *unrighteous* behavior, we will not be blessed or happy, because we will suffer as a consequence of our actions.

We live in a fallen world that opposes God and everything righteous so, when we suffer for living for Jesus, our reward is the kingdom of Heaven.

Believers will often suffer persecution in the workplace, sometimes even severe persecution, and injustices as well.

Persecution for the right reasons, demonstrates that the powers of darkness see us succeeding in furthering God's kingdom. Satan never attacks those who are not a threat to his agenda.

So, you can rejoice that you are enduring this persecution for the Kingdom's sake, just like the prophets who came before you.

Our enemy wants us to believe we are alone while suffering, but other Christians experience some of the same conflicts, we do.

Notice Paul added, “*Having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.*”

Not only did Paul warn them of the suffering they would endure, but he reminded them they were not alone in the suffering.

Paul suffered just as these believers did but ultimately Jesus was there with all of them throughout the easy and hard times of life.

The presence of conflict within the life of a believer, if it is brought on because of our devotion to Christ, is a privilege.

Wiersbe said, “*Going through spiritual conflict is one way we have to grow in Christ.*”

God gives us the strength we need to stand firm against the enemy, and this confidence is proof to him that he will lose, and we are on the winning side.

As we face the enemy and depend on the Lord, He gives us all that we need for the battle. When the enemy sees our God-given confidence, it makes him fear.”

III. Like minded believers.

Read *Philippians 2:1-2*

The secret to maintaining peace within the body of Christ happens by all of its members, having a **single-minded** focus.

Paul started with the word, “*Therefore*”, so we must find out what it is there for.

This points us to the statement in *Philippians 1:27*, *that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.*

There is an AWANA game called the four-way tug of war. If that is the way the local church operates, no one wins.

Notice Paul said, “*if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded.*”

We should take these rhetorical questions in *Philippians 2:1* as a litmus test to see how we are doing as a body of believers.

First, we see *consolation*, which means comfort and solace and of course, there is a lot of comfort and solace in Christ so this is a rhetorical question from Paul.

Next Paul mentions “*comfort of love*”. *2 Corinthians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.*

Jesus calls the Holy Spirit our helper and our comforter which is the same word used in *2 Corinthians 1:3 God of all comfort.*

The next point, “*If there is any fellowship of the Spirit.*”

Fellowship means sharing things in common so Christians have the same Spirit and therefore we should be like-minded.

Finally, Paul mentions the *affection and mercy* of God.

These rhetorical questions from Paul are meant to show us how we should die to our selfish desires and live in harmony as like-minded believers.

R. Kent Hughes said, “*To be gospel oriented is to be others oriented.*” (R. Kent Hughes)

When a body is behaving this way, it causes us to...

IV. Look out for the interests of others.

Read *Philippians 2:3-4*

As followers of Christ, we must always check the motivation of our hearts and constantly ask ourselves why we do, what we do.

In *Philippians 1*, Paul teaches Christ comes first in our lives. In *Philippians 2*, Paul is communicating that others must be next.

Wiersbe said, “***Others**” is the key idea in this chapter; the believer’s eyes are turned away from himself and focused on the needs of others.*”

The way to true joy in the life of a Christian can be explained by using the acrostic for joy: Jesus, others, and then you.

Not all ambition is selfish, ambition to glorify and serve God with everything we have, is always a form of good ambition.

And *conceit* is thinking too highly of oneself which will always lead to doing things to benefit ourselves rather than others.

Selfish ambition and conceit are trademarks of carnal, worldly people, because this is how the flesh operates.

The world rewards *selfish ambition and conceit*. We see the rewards given to social media influencers, sports players, celebrities, and politicians.

But *selfish ambition and conceit* should not be a trait found in the life of a true follower of Christ.

Paul gave the cure for *selfish ambition and conceit*, “*But in lowliness of mind (humility in the NIV) let each esteem others better than himself.*”

The Greeks considered **humility**, to be a fault, not a virtue.

Lenski said, “*The secular idea of manhood is self-assertiveness, imposing one’s will on others; when anyone stooped to others he did so only under compulsion, so his action was disgraceful.*”

This passage is not teaching us to be doormats, but rather...

Believers are to be in **unity** with each other, as we are led by the Holy Spirit’s comfort, fellowship, tenderness, compassion, love, and purpose while discovering our motivation for our actions.

V. Practical Application.

The Army Good Conduct Medal is awarded for excellent behavior, efficiency, and fidelity in active military service.

There is no right or entitlement to the medal until the immediate commander has approved the award.

We are soldiers in a heavenly army, with a specific call of duty!

The Greek word which is translated as “**conduct**” means “to live as a citizen.” We are citizens of heaven and ambassadors of Christ on Earth.

Ambassadors are representatives who remember the honor and reputation of their homeland with their **conduct**.

Paul says let your **conduct be worthy of the Gospel**.

Paul was so passionate about believers being like-minded that even though he was on death row, he would have complete joy if he heard these Christians lived out the Gospel in unity.

Someone once said, “*You are writing a gospel, a chapter each day, by the deeds that you do and the words that you say.*”

Men read what you write, whether faithful or true: just what is the gospel according to you?”

Re-read ***Philippians 1:27***

Our Christian conduct should reflect holiness. Those who desire to walk upright before the Lord need to be on guard against unforgiveness, anger, and resentment.

Being holy isn’t something we can do under our own strength, and we are not holy to earn approval. Nor is being **holy**, natural.

Our **conduct** can only be holy and represent the Gospel well when we are empowered by the Holy Spirit.