

Text: Phil 1.27-30

The last four verses of Phil 1 move into the “instruction phase” of the epistle.

The instructions here have to do with how to conduct themselves in the face of growing opposition to their faith.

I. Call to worthy conduct (27)

Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ

Conduct yourselves “speaks of one’s manner of life seen as a duty to a body or group of which one is a member, and to the head of the group to whom he is responsible.”¹

The word is πολιτεύομαι — *politeuomai*. We get our word “politics” from the root.

- Philippi was a Roman colony, its citizens were Roman citizens
- Paul uses this term to play on their experience, and duty of loyalty to Rome
- In the same way Christians have a duty of loyalty to Christ

so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you

Paul expressed his hope to come to them, but regardless, he wanted to hear about their worthy walk

that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

The expression of their “heavenly citizenship” — their walking as citizens

1. Standing firm (στήκω — *steko*, we get “stake” from this word) in one spirit (inner man)
2. Striving together (we get “athlete” from this root) — in one mind [attitude, emotions]: that is, playing as a team

¹ Kenneth S Wuest, *Philippians in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1945), 49.

Object of their effort: the faith of the gospel

- Not just orthodoxy
- Also here I think is the idea of the communally held beliefs; loyalty to Christ and his church is called for

II. Caution against any stumbling (28)

in no way alarmed by your opponents

The word “alarmed” often used of frightened horses, who shy away when startled, upset their cart or rider

Their opponents shouldn't be allowed to startle them

Opponents here are unbelievers, not false teachers or false Christians

which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God.

The opposition of the opponents is the sign of two things

1. Destruction in the opponents (their destiny)
2. Salvation for the Philippians (their destiny)

All of this is from God

III. Conscious of normal opposition (29-30)

For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him

“believe” refers to the gift of salvation through faith

but also to suffer for His sake

Suffering for the faith is a normal consequence of a living faith

“Suffering in itself is not a privilege, but it is a privilege to suffer in behalf of the Lord Jesus Christ.”²

We don't set out to suffer, but if we walk worthy of Christ, we will suffer in some way

² Harold J. Berry, *Gems from the Original: Studies in Philippians* (Lincoln, NE: Back to the Bible, 1978), 53.

experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me

Recalls Paul and Silas in jail in Philippi

and now hear to be in me

Reminds of Paul's present experience in Rome

Paul's experience is offered as an illustration of the normal experience for Christians.

Conclusion:

So, the Philippians should

- Accept suffering for Christ as normal
- Should not allow suffering to shake them from their course
- Should resolve to conduct themselves as heavenly citizens under a personal obligation (like a political obligation) to the Lord Jesus