**Conduct Worthy of the Gospel**

**Introduction:**

The Christians in Philippi lived in a city which had a great heritage of citizenship. Philippi was a Roman colony whose citizens were very proud of their citizenship. These Christians were members of the first European church Paul had founded. In the letter that Paul writes to them, he directs them to live a life worthy of the gospel of Christ because they were citizens of the Kingdom of Christ.

**Text:** Philippians 1:27-28 “Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.” NKJV

**Body:**

1. **Let Your Manner of Life Be Worthy**

* The Greek word translated “manner of life” means to behave as a citizen. This is something with which the Philippians were well acquainted. Paul wants them to understand the significance of being citizens of the kingdom of heaven. (Philippians 3:20) “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,” NKJV This is a command of Paul. It will take determination and willpower. They need to be passionate about their citizenship.
* The Christian, as a citizen, as a citizen of the Kingdom of God is to live worthy of the gospel. Being worthy means being loyal, a person of integrity and conviction. Christians must possess a passionate patriotism for the gospel.

1. **Stand Firm**

* Be immovable. Christians are not to be moved from their kingdom citizenship by anyone or anything. They are not to be moved by circumstances, social pressures, feelings or emotions, comfort, persecution or ridicule. They must take an unflinching stand for the truth of the gospel and a stand against evil and falsehood.
* Our society wants us to go along with it, give into its worldly desires and pleasures. It is far easier to follow the world than to take a stand against it.

“It is said that when Napoleon’s army was invading Russia his soldiers came to a village from which all the inhabitants had fled except one man. He was a Russian peasant, a woodsman, and still carried his ax in his leather belt. When the French captain saw him he ordered that he be shot immediately. The French soldiers leveled their guns at his head but he did not flinch. The captain was frustrated by this old man’s courage.

Telling his soldiers to lower their guns, he said, ‘We will spare his life, but we will put a mark on him – we will brand him.’ So his soldiers brought a branding iron, got it red hot, and placed it on his hand. The man saw and felt his own flesh burn, but still he did not flinch. When the branding iron was removed the peasant saw the letter ‘N’ branded on his palm. ‘What is that?’ he asked. ‘This is the letter ‘N’ and it stands for Napoleon; you belong to Napoleon now,’ replied the captain.

For a moment the old man did not know what to do or say. His pain was intense, but his loyalty and patriotism was even more passionate, so he placed his burned hand on something solid, and as the soldiers were laughing and jeering at him, he took his ax from his belt with his other hand and brought it swiftly and forcefully down and severed his branded hand at the wrist.

‘There,’ he said to the soldiers, ‘the hand may belong to Napoleon, but I am a Russian. If I must die, I will die a Russian.’ ” ***Example given by Paul Butler***

We may think that is rather severe, but listen to Matthew 5:29-30. “If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.” NKJV Jesus is serious about His followers taking a stand and remaining firm. Also Colossians 1:22-23. “in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight – if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.” NKJV

1. **Striving Side By Side**

* We get the English word “athletics” from the Greek word. These athletic contests required self-discipline, training, practice, work, sweat, concentration, and the will to win. Paul wanted the Philippian Christians to strive for their spiritual prize with the same intensity as the Olympic athletes strove for their physical prize.
* How much is the eternal prize worth to us? Is it worth all the energy and work that it requires? The Christian life is not a walk in the park. We must constantly be striving and going forward. (Philippians 3:7-8, 12-14) “But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead. I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” NKJV
* Is the prize worth striving against family and friends? Is it worth working hard to attain? Is it worth giving up the pleasures and sins of this world? Remember the words of Paul in II Timothy 4:6-8. “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.” NKJV

1. **Not Frightened By Your Opponents**

* The Kingdom of God can never be destroyed – it is unshakable. Christians are citizens of this eternal kingdom.
* No one can rob us of our heavenly inheritance. Thieves can’t break through and steal it. It is imperishable. (I Peter 1:4) “to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you. NKJV
* The enemy, Satan, cannot destroy us or our inheritance. (Ephesians 6:11-13) “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 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. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” NKJV Remember the words of II Kings 6:16-17. “So he answered, ‘Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.’ And Elisha prayed, and said, ‘Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.’ Then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.” NKJV

**Conclusion:**

As citizens of the heavenly kingdom, Christians are called to live lives worthy of the gospel. We must stand firm, strive valiantly, and not be frightened by our opponent.

Bobby Stafford March 27, 2016 [Evening]