

*I press on
toward the goal to
win the prize for
which God has
called me
heavenward
in Christ
Jesus.*

Philippians 3:14

Following the upward call through Philippians ...

Worthy Conduct

The National Football League recently suspended indefinitely a player who beat up his fiancé in an elevator, probably because the footage of the event was widely distributed. One of the points in the issue, although the event was politically charged due to other agendas on the American cultural landscape, was that the player represented both his team and the National Football League in his personal conduct, and because that conduct was detrimental to the League, they were suspending him. The Christian likewise needs to recognize that he represents his local congregation as

well as the name of Christ. The Lord Jesus is therefore justified in setting forth His expectations for the members of His team because ultimately it is His name on the line.

- **Walking worthy** — The apostle Paul, as an authorized spokesman for Jesus Christ, exhorts the brethren in Philippi. "Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ," he pleads (Philippians 1:27). The barriers to the saint's walking in a manner that would positively represent Christ all stem from personal selfishness. There are certain things that he might want to do which would not befit one who claims the name of Christ, but because he wants to do them, driven by some desire of the flesh, he would be willing to have the name of Christ "trashed." Or, there might be certain things he should do or be doing, but because of sloth or a yearning to do something else, he does not do them, and once again the name of Jesus is denigrated. The call of God is to move past the personal, and to bring the conduct up to Christ's standard. *Worthy* is the watchword.

- **Standing firm** — Paul's repeated desire is to see the brethren in Philippi. He knows that he will be delivered from prison and will have the opportunity to continue to preach to the lost and strengthen the saints. But it is not as clear whether he will come to Philippi, or when. "Whether I come and see you," says he, "or remain absent," his desire is that "I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." The spread of the gospel and conservation of the saints requires teamwork, and a willingness to stand together against the forces of darkness. The idea of "one mind" indicates that there is no room for personal agendas; the only agenda and the only mind should be that of Christ.

- **The faith** — Repeatedly, the scripture talks of "one faith" or "the faith." Here the apostle speaks of "the faith of the gospel," meaning the system of thought which comes to man through the gospel of Christ. The goal of God, then, is that "we all attain to the unity of the faith" (Ephesians 4:13). There are, therefore, not a multiplicity of faiths, nor an individual "my faith" that is contradistinguished from others. While the details of that faith are carried out differently in Christians, it is to be the same faith. That faith ultimately focuses on Christ in glory, and transforms the individual saint into that image of the glorified Christ in his inner man. This "measure of the stature that belongs to the fullness of Christ" results in true unity of the Spirit. "The glory," said Jesus in His prayer address to the Father before He crossed the Kidron, "which You have given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one" (John 17:22).

Teamwork within the local body of Christ is absolutely essential in the forward progress of the gospel. God did not intend for the Christian to be a stand alone unit, except when beginning a new work, enduring persecution, or facing the final phases of passage from this earth. The gospel rides on the combined prayers of the saints and their working together. Thus the apostle appeals, "conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ."

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