

## Believers' Noblesse Oblige: Unity of Disposition, Purpose, Spirituality, Thought, & Application, Phil 1:27; Do Not Be Intimidated by Opposition, v. 28a

**Philippians 1:27** - Conduct yourselves as citizens who behave [ πολίτευω, *politeuō* ] in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ [ ἵνα, *hina* ], in order that whether I come to Philippi or remain absent, I will hear that you are standing fast [ στήκω, *stēkō* ] in one Spirit [ πνεῦμα, *pneuma* ] and one soul [ ψυχῇ, *psuchē* ] cooperating in the conflict [ συναθλέω, *sunathleō* ] for the faith of the gospel.

1. In this verse we see a series of causes and effects that impose the following obligations upon members of the Philippian church:
  - 1) **πολιτεύω, politeuō**: Develop behavior patterns, character traits, and a lifestyle that are compatible with one's heritage in the privileged class of heaven. The French phrase "noblesse oblige" describes this concept perfectly. It literally means "nobility obligates." By definition it refers to "the obligation of honorable, generous, and responsible behavior associated with high rank or birth."<sup>1</sup> This requires unity of disposition among believers.
  - 2) There are purposes for this obligation and they follow the purpose clause introduced by ἵνα, *hina*, the first being **στήκω, stēkō**: "to stand fast" before the challenges, difficulties, and assaults common to doing battle in the Angelic Conflict. This requires unity of purpose among believers.
  - 3) This is to be accomplished by being united in "one Spirit": **πνεῦμα, pneuma** which is only possible through the collective use of rebound and maintenance of the filling of the Holy Spirit. This requires unity of status quo spirituality.
  - 4) When members of a local church submit to the mentorship of the Holy Spirit they will collectively advance, although at various rates, to the level of spiritual adulthood. All however, will have one **ψυχῇ, psuchē**: "one soul" with regard to the foundational, fundamental, and basic doctrines related to the spiritual *politeuma*. This requires unity of thought.
  - 5) Unity of thought creates a spiritual phalanx of believers who are "cooperating in the conflict": **συναθλέω, sunathleō**. This describes the body of Christ functioning as one unit in application of doctrine. This is unity of application.
2. These untied functions include the individual function of spiritual gifts and the universal application of unconditional love.
3. Each believer is encouraged by Paul to utilize the *politeuma* privileges of his heavenly citizenship:

<sup>1</sup> Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed., s.v.: "noblesse oblige."

- 1) Life inside the divine power system.
  - 2) Utilization of the three spiritual skills.
  - 3) The execution of the sophisticated spiritual life.
  - 4) Spiritual esprit de corps that has invisible historical impact in Philippi.
4. These are but a few of the assets that enable the believer to develop courage toward life and circumstances, a subject addressed by Paul in:

**Philippians 1:28a** - Likewise, in no way be intimidated [ **πτόρω, pturō** ] by those who oppose you ...

5. Consciousness of and utilization of one's *poletuma* privileges gives him the courage to stand fast before his enemies and to confront with courage the issues that emerge from life and its circumstances.
6. In verse 28, the words translated "in no way be intimidated" are the negative conjunction **μή, mē** followed by the present passive participle of:

**πτόρω, pturō:**

To frighten, to startle, to terrify. The metaphor is of a timid horse. Perhaps there is an allusion to Cassius who at the First Battle of Philippi committed suicide at the fear of defeat.<sup>2</sup>

present:

Retroactive progressive: that which is begun in the past and continues to the present.

passive:

Believers are not to receive the action of the emotional sin of fright.

participle:

The participle is imperatival and therefore is a command for believers at Philippi to not become frightened. It occurs contemporaneous in time to the action of the main verb which is **stēkō** found in verse 27 and means "to stand fast."

7. You cannot stand fast if you are intimidated. The believers at Philippi are instructed by Paul to stand fast in the face of religious persecution while simultaneously remaining undaunted by it.
8. To be absent fright in the face of intimidation is to be undaunted, a disposition of mind marked by continuing determination to hold your ground.
9. The mental attitude that undergirds this courageous stand is response to the command, "Conduct yourselves as citizens."

<sup>2</sup> Cleon Rogers Jr. and Cleon Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 450.

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**v. 28a** - while at the same time in no way being intimidated—but rather remain undaunted— by those who oppose you ...”

27. Paul is using the concept of good Roman citizenship to illustrate how a believer must orient to his obligations in the devil’s world.
28. As a good citizen of heaven the believer must stand fast behind the shield of faith in the power of the Word in order to withstand persecution.
29. Paul’s emphasis is that their modus vivendi must be oriented to their heavenly citizenship – *πολιτεύω, politeuō* – if they are to become good soldiers of Christ in an earthly community.
30. Obviously, if they are citizens of the heavenly community – *politeuō* –, then they must possess the privileges of this heavenly citizenship – *polituma*.
31. Consequently, if there is a heavenly *politeuō*, is there a heavenly *polituma*?
32. Most assuredly! Note Philippians 3:20:

**Ἡμῶν φάρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει, *Humōn gar to politeuma en ouranois huparchei:***

“Our privileges of citizenship are in heaven.”

33. For the few who take the time to learn of their heavenly aristocracy and its privileges, life becomes a blessing.
34. These few – these happy few – have the power and the will to confront every challenge with tranquility of soul brought about by confidence in the Word and courage in the face of life and circumstances.
35. The privileges, opportunities, prerogatives, assets, and responsibilities found in the *polituma* of heaven give the believer distinct and overwhelming advantage in the Angelic Conflict.