

VI. Laws of Divine Establishment and the Royal Family Honor Code: Politeuma of Rome

He then refers to the type competition in which these believers are at battle, it is the same kind which he himself has faced and still faces:

Philippians 1:30 - ... experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear to be in me.

Paul writes this epistle from imprisonment in Rome under Nero. The conflict is therefore the engagements of the Angelic Conflict.

The representative from the Philippian church who is visiting Paul in Rome is Epaphroditus whom Paul calls “my fellow soldier.” Philippians 2:25

He compares the Christian way of life as a race in:

Philippians 3:14 - I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

He challenges them to order themselves in a military phalanx, marching together in unison for Christ:

Philippians 3:16 - ...let us keep living [*stoicheo*] by that same standard to which we have attained.

Stoicheo is a military term which is a synonym for *peripateo*, the word for walking. The military word emphasizes the act of a phalanx of soldiers marching in step.

The idea incorporated here is the power a church has when its members are unified by a corporate understanding of a mutually accepted belief system.

As an army is trained to withstand opposition by means of a unified effort in which all soldiers submit to a common system of military tactics, so should believers defend the faith and stand fast for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

All of these metaphors appealed to the military mind set and athletic proclivities of the male believers in the Philippian church.

As Roman citizens, these Macedonian men were obligated to demonstrate that the Roman *Zeitgeist* was superior to all others within the Empire.

In effect, citizens of a colony were asked to live as ambassadors for Rome.

Likewise, Paul admonishes these believers to function as citizens of the heavenly community, utilizing all its privileges and assets to represent the kingdom of God as ambassadors for Christ.

Ambassadors for Christ are asked to take no insult personally but to demonstrate under all circumstances the superiority of the Christian way of life over that of the Devil’s world.

The believers at Philippi were able to do this through the teaching of Paul.

Paul, in effect, enabled them to orienteer to their circumstances by appealing to their patriotic juices.

Just as you are proud of your citizenship in the Roman Empire and seek to represent it in the Philippian colony, so should you strive to represent Christ in the colony of the universal church of Christ on earth.

Let's examine the metaphor of the Roman and Heavenly politeumas.

The Politeuma of Rome

Citizenship: The status of an individual who enjoys the freedoms and privileges of a socio-political entity of which he is an official resident. Citizenship implies allegiance to a government or its sovereign and the entitlement to protection from it.

We have just noted that in Acts 16:12, Philippi is described as a Roman colony.

The word for colony found there is: from the root word for "*cultivation*." Thus, it is a derivative from *cultus*.

Roman colonies were of three categories and Philippi was established as a class three colony.

A class three colony established land grants to veterans who retained their citizenship.

As such it was free from taxes and military duty. It had its own constitution and elected its own senate and legislature.

The constitution was a copy of the Roman and each citizen was obligated to submit to it.

Following the victory of the Triumvirate army, Augustus converted Philippi into a class three colony.

Following the Second Battle of Philippi, the city was constituted a Roman colony and veterans of the Triumvirate army were allowed to settle there.

This legal act made Philippi a miniature likeness of Rome and its people enjoyed the status of Roman citizenship.

The colonial status of the city was called *jus Italicum*: "*Italian Law*," while the citizenship of its inhabitants was called *politeuma*.

One of the objectives of such a colony was to demonstrate to alien residents of the frontier the superior quality of Roman life.

This *politeuma* provided the Roman citizen with completely different legal standing in the Empire compared with that of the resident alien or the citizen of the provinces.

The privileges enjoyed and possessed by the Roman citizen of the Philippian colony are described by this Greek word and include the following:

1. Maintained Roman culture in terms of food, housing, dress, language, religion, and lifestyle.
2. They were not required to pay taxes and all items purchased in trade came to them at half price.
3. Roman citizenship provided exemption from all degrading punishments which included scourging with rods or whips and especially crucifixion.
4. It gave the citizen the right to appeal to the Emperor after a sentence was announced.
5. And, if charged with a capital offense, he had the right to be sent to Rome for a trial before the Emperor.
6. Only a citizen of Rome could hold public office so this opportunity for service was open to the residents of Philippi.
7. *Politeuma* granted the right to free travel and the guarantee of protection wherever a person went within the empire.

8. *Politeuma* exempted Roman citizens from all local laws without his consent.
9. It granted access to Roman courts anywhere in the Empire.
10. Under the Edicts of Augustus, the trial of a Roman citizen must follow these procedures:
 - a. An indictment of charges and penalties.
 - b. A formal accusation.
 - c. A hearing before a Roman official and his advisors.

From all of this, two questions arise:

1. How did one become a Roman citizen?
2. When apprehended by law, how did one prove his citizenship?

Citizenship could be acquired in several ways:

1. By birth to parents who were Roman citizens.
2. Legislative extension. The Emperor could grant citizenship to certain provinces such as class three status to Philippi.
3. Twenty-five years of service in the Roman army.
4. Manumission from slavery. The ceremony was called *vindicta* where the slave was touched by the lictor's rod.
5. Purchase; you could buy your citizenship.
6. Granted to those who performed some special service to the Empire.
7. Adoption by a Roman citizen.