

**Please turn in your Bibles to Philippians chapter 3. Last time we were together I made mention that our text was the beginning of the end of Paul's argument and exhortation against the false teachers in Philippi. Today we come to that end where he concludes this section with further application and warning. Hear now the Word of our Lord from Philippians chapter 3 beginning in verse 17.**

**\*Read Philippians 3:17-21\***

**\*Pray\***

**Throughout this entire chapter Paul has been instructing the saints at Philippi who and what to look out for in order to remain safe from false teachers who had entered into their midst. These false teachers, these Judaizers, were seeking to draw believers away from the faith once for all delivered unto the saints by teaching a false gospel of faith plus works. This perversion of the Gospel of Jesus Christ was a terribly wicked thing. Those false teachers posed themselves as agents of the Lord in order to gain the trust of the saints within the church, but in actuality they were agents of Satan seeking to build their own blasphemous church of deceived followers. Paul exercised his God-ordained pastoral duty to guard and protect and shepherd these sheep from the dogs which sought to devour them. Paul's words against these dogs are harsh. In our modern society today if a man were to stand up and say the exact same things that Paul did about the Judaizers against the present-day wolves masquerading as messengers of Christ he would be crucified in the court of public opinion. Those within the church would say he's causing unnecessary division, majoring in the minors, or being unloving. All you have to do is look online at any time someone speaks out against heretics like Doug Wilson that Antichrist Pope Benedict who is now receiving his just reward and you will see the masses come out bearing arms. But Paul doesn't hold any punches, and neither will I when it comes to loving and protecting you all as the flock Jehovah has placed in my care. You have to know the false teachers and their false teaching in order to be avoid it at all costs. But friends, that's not enough. It is not**

enough to know which way not to go; you know which way to go. Here in our text this morning Paul concludes his portion against the false teachers by instructing the saints at Philippi to look to the examples placed before them, both good and bad, and to let them be as guiding principles in running this race of the Christian life and reaching forth toward the attainment of glory. The exhortation to you this morning is to walk in the way of the righteous in anticipation of your heavenly reward. We will consider this under three heads: first, the way of the wicked; next, the way of the righteous; and finally, the end of the journey.

Here in our text Paul lays forth two categories of examples which ought to aid in our recognizing how we are to walk as believers through this life. The first example for us to look at is the one which we ought to avoid: the way of the wicked. Look with me at verses 18 and 19, “For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.” Here Paul essentially says, ‘Look at these false teachers, how their lives give evidence of their heresy, how they lead others down the path of perdition. Take note and use them as an example of what not to do. Do not follow in their way.’ He doesn’t just leave these saints to guess what it is that they are look for and avoid, but instead gives them a list of four characteristics which can be seen in them. First, we see that they are enemies of the cross. These men were impostors and reckless, who trampled under foot the power of the Gospel. They did not seek to promote the cross of Christ but instead put it to an open shame. Their teaching was one which did not point men to the Savior, but one which pointed men down a path of misery and despair. Paul says that their god is their belly. He’s not speaking of mere gluttony, though in a sense that could be implied here. Much more is being spoken of here than simply that. What’s being spoken of here is most likely a reference to their portraying a bogus ministry and promoting a false gospel in order that they can indulge their sensual appetites for fame and following and greed and filthy

lucre. This confirms their status as enemies of the cross for it does so much violence to the propagation of the true Gospel. Calvin remarks, "Persons of this sort, who weaken the influence of the ministry by seeking their own interests, sometimes do more injury than if they openly opposed Christ."

Paul goes on to say these men glory in their shame. Oh how often do we see people even today glory in the things which are most shameful, making light of their sins and failings, some even wearing them as a badge of honor. This was no different in the first century. These false teachers were glorying in their own self righteousness, in their own acts, something which ought to have brought shame upon them and led them to repentance. They not only sinned, but boasted of it and gloried in that of which they ought to have been ashamed. Sin is the sinner's shame, especially when it is gloried in. And finally, Paul says that they mind earthly things. These men think of nothing but the things of this world for they cannot think of anything but the things of this world. Christ came by his cross to crucify the world to us and us to the world; and those who mind earthly things act directly contrary to the cross of Christ, and this great design of it. They relish earthly things, and have no relish of the things which are spiritual and heavenly. They set their hearts and affections on earthly things; they love them, and even dote upon them, and have a confidence and complacency in them.

Friends, this is the example set before you which you are to avoid. This is the way of the wicked which the psalmist speaks against in Psalm 1, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." When you see men walking in this way you must take note and ensure that you do not follow them down the same path. When you see them, especially if they profess the name of Christ, and even more so if they claim to be ministers of the Gospel, it ought to cause you to weep as the Apostle does. It is with tears that you ought to cry out to Jehovah to bring about repentance in these wicked examples and also to provide protection

for you and other saints to not follow them down the same path of perdition. By you gasping, by your weeping, by your cries you express how deeply you are grieved for the present state of the Church. And friends, trust me, you ought to be grieved. If you are not then I worry that something is gravely wrong with you. How can you see the Bride of Christ being led astray by wicked harlotries and not be brought to tears? Is it because you too have been deceived by the whore which seeks to steal Christ's Bride, and you have already begun your journey walking in the way of the wicked? If this is the case, then with weeping cries I call you to turn away from this wickedness. Put aside the wretched idol you have made of your bellies, your sensuous carnal desires, and find your pleasure and fullness in the one who fills all in all. Come unto Christ, set your face like flint towards Him, and avoid the way of the wicked.

Paul doesn't just tell the saints at Philippi what to avoid, but lays before them the example which they are to follow. This leads us now to consider the way of the righteous. Look with me at verses 17 and 20, "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." This seems to be very similar to what was seen at the end of chapter 2 when Paul commended to the Philippian believers the examples of Timothy and Epaphroditus. If you recall Paul was saying here are two men you know who illustrate the very qualities you are to imitate. Salvation has been worked out in their characters - look at them and you will know exactly what I mean. Here again he calls the saints to look to those examples set before them, beginning with the example of himself. This is interesting, because he has just previously finished telling these saints that he has not yet achieved perfection. Why would he then go on to encourage them to follow an imperfect example. I believe the answer is clear, there is but one perfect example which is Christ Jesus alone, but we all need someone that we can physically see and interact with to be an example for us as well. Paul is in no way saying that he is the perfect example or that these saints should not look unto Christ; no, 1

**Corinthians 11:1 makes this clear, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.” Paul is saying that believers can imitate and follow the example of more mature and faithful believers insofar as they are imitating Christ. And he makes it clear it is not because he is somehow better than everyone else, but instead puts himself on an even level with “them which walk.” There were many solid, mature, godly men in Philippi who the saints could emulate, and so Paul encourages them to do so.**

**So what is the characteristic of those whose examples are to be followed? Essentially everything about those who walk in the way of the wicked is opposed by those who walk in the way of the righteous. But more specifically he says, “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.” Those who walk in the way of righteousness have their minds, hearts, affections set on the things of heaven. They are not consumed by the things of the world; they are not gluttonous for the fulfillment of a sensual appetite for ungodly things; they are not enemies of the cross of Christ, but instead partakers of the sufferings of the Lord. On their lips was not the vile speech which is characteristic of the wicked, but instead words of life seasoned with salt and sweeter than honey because they are saturated with the very Word of God. They do not glory in their shame but instead embrace true and godly repentance and glory only in the finished work of Christ Jesus. This is the example that Paul says the saints in Philippi are to follow, not those wicked false teachers whose lives bear the rotten fruit of their rotten doctrine. Those who are to be an example have their eyes fixed upon the Lord Jesus Christ; they are ever looking to His example and imitating Him with their lives; they are keeping Him as their focus and ever advancing towards Him. That is what it means to imitate someone as they imitate Christ, to do just as they are doing in this regard.**

**Brothers and sisters, this must be true of you as well. Matthew Henry says, “The life of a Christian is in heaven, where his head is, and his home is, and where he hopes to be shortly; he sets his**

**affections upon things above; and where his heart is there will his conversation be.” What about you? Do you look for, admire, and imitate the Christ-likeness you see in others? Do you pray for yourselves lest you cause others to stumble by bringing shame to the name of the Lord? Do you pray that others will catch a glimpse of Christ through what you are and want to trust, know and love Him better? Who are the examples that you are following? Are they men who proclaim a false gospel, whose speech is more akin to an ungodly sailor than one claiming to be a minister of the Gospel, whose life is marked by covering up wickedness and building a blind following and a name for himself? Or are they men who have a proven pattern of faithfulness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, whose speech is tender and loving and edifying, whose life is marked by their personal godliness and unwavering walk in the Lord?**

**Dear saints, look to your elders as examples for how to walk in the way of the righteous. Elder Bob has been an ordained under-shepherd in Christ’s Church for 40 years; you would be a fool not to look to him as an example to follow and to not seek to glean from his wisdom. Look to others within the Church, men and women who you respect, who have a proven record of walking in the way of righteousness. Look to one another, guiding one another along this path, aiding one another when one seems to be beginning to stray from the path. Do not be afraid or too humble to seek to be an example for others. Your life should portray to all who look upon it what walking in the way of the righteous looks like. Let your conversation be in heaven, ever looking towards to the Lord Jesus Christ. Seek to be that blessed man in Psalm 1 whose “delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.” Be the pattern for others to copy in how to do these things well. It is not a vain things to strive for; it is not a self-righteous thing to seek to attain. Your lives should be as such that you can say to others just as Paul does, “Brethren, be followers together of me.” Follow the examples set before you, be that example for others, and walk in the way of the righteous.**

**These two paths, the way of the wicked and the way of the righteous, both have their end. The day will come when we all will reach our end. This leads us to consider our final head: the end of the journey. Look with me at our passage once again, “Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” First let us consider the end of the way of the wicked. Paul says in his description of the wicked that their end is destruction. This is what awaits those who are outside of Christ. Revelation 22:15 makes this clear, “For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.” Their reward is to be cast away, to be outside the gate, to be barred from entering into the city of God and dwelling in the midst of His holy presence. Anyone who is not in Christ will receive their just reward, and it will be exclusion from the life-giving fruit of Christ and the presence of the Lord in the new Jerusalem. Their reward will be just that of their father, the devil: to be cast into the lake of fire where there is no hope of respite. David says in Psalm 37:20, “The wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord shall be as fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away.” Psalm 1 makes this very plain as well, “The way of the ungodly shall perish.” This is the end of the journey for those who walk in the way of the wicked.**

**But the end of the journey for those who walk in the way of the righteous is wholly different, “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even**

to subdue all things unto himself.” It is the attainment of that heavenly prize, that shedding off this body of corruption and being given a new glorified body, that being permitted to enter into the physical presence of the Almighty which is our reward. It is the conquering of all things which is our end: the conquering of the flesh, the conquering of sin, the conquering of this world, and all because we are united with Christ and His victory is our own. Henry writes, “At Christ’s resurrection was a glorious instance of the divine power, and therefore he is declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1:4), so will our resurrection be: and his resurrection is a standing evidence, as well as pattern, of ours. And then all the enemies of the Redeemer’s kingdom will be completely conquered. Not only he who had the power of death, that is, the devil (Heb. 2:14), but the last enemy, shall be destroyed, that is, death, 1 Cor. 15:26, shall be swallowed up in victory, 1 Cor. 15:54.” Oh what a glorious day that will be when the old has completely passed away and the perfection has come! What a glorious day that will be when we will all walk the streets of the New Jerusalem, fellowshiping with one another, praising and magnifying the name of Jehovah for all eternity!

That is what awaits you if you are in Christ. Oh how that ought to be an encouragement for your soul as you trudge through this life of sin and misery. Dear saints you ought to lift up your minds to heaven, and be wholly attached to Christ – because this body which you carry about with you is not an everlasting abode, but a frail tabernacle, which will in a short time be reduced to nothing. Then you will be given a glorious new body, one without pains, or aches, or ailments; one that is perfect in every way. But that is not the only comfort to you, friends. That Christ will ultimately subdue all things and put them under his subjection ought to be a great comfort to you as well. The wicked magistrates which seek to promote and protect perversity will one day be brought to naught. The wicked hearts of men which seek to stay the Gospel from going forth will one day be vanquished and the whole earth will be full of the glory of the Lord. Friends this is what you have to look forward



**to. This ought to be your anticipation, your hope, your longing, your desire. And this end will only be reached by following the example of the faithful who have gone before you and avoiding the way of the wicked. Brothers and sisters, walk in the way of the righteous in anticipation of your heavenly reward.**