

Philippians 3:17-19

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on September 16, 2007

Walk This Way, Part 1

Prayer

Oh, great and gracious God, we praise you for again an opportunity as a body to come together to worship You. To proclaim Your excellencies. To reflect on who You truly are, as revealed in Your Word. To give You praise and honor and glory because of Your Son Jesus Christ. Father, help us to set aside all wickedness and malice and all that remains and any sin, to confess that and receive the Word implanted. Father, may we come before You and Your Word with humble hearts, recognizing we cannot understand unless Your Spirit gives us insight. Recognizing we cannot teach unless You fully enable us. Recognizing we are not adequate to consider anything as coming from ourselves but our adequacy is from You. In that, we trust You to do that: to be glorified now through Your Word in our lives. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Sermon

I am always amazed when I hear of statistics in which we hear how many people in America claim to be Christians. And I think right around now it is hovering around 79% of those who claim to be Christians. And then within that statistic, there are about 39% that claim to be born again. And within that statistic there is even a lower number of those who actually claim and believe that the Bible is God's Word. Now, folks, it seems like when you sift through all of those numbers there are not many people (at least by what they say) that are true believers. We will see later on the apostle John makes it clear that if they do not listen to us, they are not from us. He is speaking of the apostles; if they do not listen and believe the Word of God, if they count it as not true then they are not saved. But it may surprise us that often, rather than all the Christians that say they are Christians (which we seem to have everywhere around us; there is a church in every school in this district.), that there are not many true believers. And this was something the disciples were confounded with when Jesus was ministering. They said to Jesus, "Are there many being saved?" Looking around, everybody wanted the stuff from Jesus- the bread and all that stuff. They wanted Him to deliver them from their trial from the Romans. But are there many being saved? Jesus said in Matthew 7:13,

¹³ "Enter by the narrow gate; (that gate being Him; He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father but by Him) for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. ¹⁴ For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it. [Matthew 7:13-14]

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Few. That is the Lord's own words. Later on in Matthew, He says in Matthew 13:31, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed." It is the smallest of seeds. When you look at true believers in the world right now, it is the smallest although many claim to be following the Lord Jesus Christ. Few that find it.

Now today we are going to see a contrast again as Paul contrasts between the walk of the true believer and the walk of a said believer which ends in destruction. And we are going to see from this how we as believers are to walk. We are exhorted from the Word of God to walk this way. And we are going to see the exhortation to walk this way. Then we are going to see two illustrations- one negative and one positive. Today we are going to see the negative one. So keep in mind as we look at the negative illustration the positive one is coming next week. It all works together.

So would you turn your Bibles with me to the book of Philippians, and we are in chapter 3. Now we have seen in the last few weeks how we can keep from being ensnared by false teaching, by having the right attitude (chapter 3), rejoicing in the Lord, heeding the warnings, diligently being ware, looking out for those false brethren. Paul made clear the marks of the true believer in the beginning of this chapter, that we worship in the spirit of God in contrast to the flesh. We glory in Christ Jesus, glory in Christ rather than in ourselves or other people, and we put no confidence in the flesh. Those are true believers, those who do those things. And we saw the marks of a true believer.

And then we saw Paul give his testimony as a contrast to these false believers. He basically said, "Oh, I could be like them. I could boast in all kinds of stuff." And he went through the list of things that he could boast in religiously. But when he met Christ, he considered it all as worthless, all as dung in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus in whom he suffered the loss of all things in order that he may gain Christ. And we saw that Paul recognized that those things that he counted as gain religiously were all loss in light of knowing Christ Jesus. And he must count it that way in order to gain Christ and His righteousness, being found in Him with a righteousness not derived from the Law of self righteousness but through faith in Jesus Christ.

Then we saw the direction and testimony of Paul, how a true believer's life looks after coming to faith in Jesus Christ. We saw Paul desired to know Christ. He desired to be like Christ. He pressed forward towards that goal, not looking back. He was singularly focused on the goal, the upward call in Christ Jesus of becoming like Christ and being with Christ. Paul's all-consuming passion was to know Christ, to be like Him and to reach that goal. And that should be the direction our lives should take, and we should see every circumstance in our lives as centered around God conforming us to the image of Christ. This should be our all-consuming passion, a focus on Christ. And simply put, the Christian life that we are in now- is sanctification- if you have come to faith in Jesus Christ can be summed up in "It is the process of becoming more like Jesus Christ, being conformed to His image (and as we saw in the last few weeks), being conformed to the Word of God dwelling richly and working in our hearts through the Spirit of God in a humble believer who is obedient by His power and strength.

Now, as I have shared many times before, there are many theologies, seminaries, tapes, books, formulas, programs that cloud the truth of the simplicity of the Christian life. Paul writes to the

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Corinthians who are being drawn away from that simplicity by those who would deceive them, false apostles, those who disguise themselves as apostles of Christ. 2 Corinthians 11:2,

²For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. ³But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. [2 Corinthians 11:2-3]

When we came to faith in Jesus Christ, we *came to faith in Jesus Christ*. We heard the Word of God and we believed it and God changed us, right? And the same thing, “As you have received Christ Jesus, the Lord, so walk in Him.” It is simple; it is His Word interacting in the life of the believer, making us more like Christ. It is simple. And there are many things that draw us away from that simplicity. One pastor writes, “Now, the goal then of every Christian's life is to be like Christ. That is the goal. That is the thing which we pursue. That is the purpose of our time here and that is the pursuit of our sanctification. It then becomes the life-long objective of every Christian to become more and more and more like Jesus Christ. That is as basic as it can be stated.” And I agree with that.

So with this in mind, combined with the exhortation we saw last week not to slip back from where you have come in your walk with Christ, we are going to see Paul now is exhorting these Philippians (and thus us) to mimic his walk, to join in following Christ in this manner. Again, let's take a look at Philippians chapter 3, verse 17-21 ***¹⁷Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.*** [Philippians 3:17] Paul begins this statement with the term “brethren”. He is addressing brethren here. He has already used that term five times in Philippians and by the time Philippians is over he will have used it eight times. He is speaking to the saints who are in Philippi. He is not speaking to the *Saint*-saints, like those worshiped in the Catholic Church. He is speaking to those who have been set apart in Christ Jesus. They have been declared righteous. They are holy in Christ. They are the brethren. And as Bob shared, “See how great a love the Father has for us that we should be called children of God.” When we believe in Jesus Christ, we are adopted in to the family of God. We are His children and we thus are all brothers and sisters of one another if we are in Christ. Brethren; believers. This is who it is directed to. If you do not know Christ, it is not going to make any sense. It is not going to make any sense. You need to know Christ, you need to be in the body of Christ and then the Lord uses His Word to make us like Christ.

“Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.” [Philippians 3:17] The first thing we see here is that he is talking to those in the Philippian church who are partakers of grace. Those in whom God had begun a good work. Those who had placed their faith in Jesus Christ, the brothers and sisters in the Lord. And now he says, “Join in following my example.” Now, this statement in English “Brethren, join in following my example” sounds almost like a suggestion, right? “Hey! Come on along with me in following this example.” Is that what it is? Is it just a suggestion? Well, there are a few Greek terms in here that I will share with you that might be helpful. One is *ginomai*. And children, by the way, you can learn languages early. This is good learning the languages early before you get old. It's harder to do it when you get older. The Greek verb is *ginomai*,

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and it means basically “to become.” Become. And it is in the imperative mood. What does that mean? It is a command. “Become fellow imitators of me,” literally. Become this. The word used in Greek, *summimetes*, we get the word “mimic” from that. Become “sum” (fellow) imitators. Become fellow imitators of me, it is not a suggestion. It is a command. It is a present-tense imperative mood. What does that mean? It just means “Continually obey this command.” You could almost literally say it this way, “Become fellow imitators of me.” Mimic, the word speaks of mimicking, imitating. It does not mean copying but it means mimicking and imitating.

Now, in a minute we will take a look specifically at what believers should imitate but before we do this we need to recognize that this is not a new command. Paul has commanded this before. 1 Corinthians, chapter 4. ***“I exhort you therefore, be imitators of me.” [1 Corinthians 4:16]*** They were all following “I am of Paul, I am of Apollos”, all of this stuff. They were following the people but not Christ manifest in the people. And then in chapter 11, he says to the Corinthians, verse 1, ***“Be imitators of me, (mimic) just as I also am of Christ.” [1 Corinthians 11:1]***

2 Thessalonians chapter 3, verse 6,

⁶ Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. (He is talking about those who are unwilling to be obedient and work as the Lord has called them to.) ⁷ For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example (or imitate our example)...” [2 Thessalonians 3:6-7a]

Now, folks, this command where Paul says, “imitate me” clearly brings up the question possibly in your minds, “Is Paul being prideful?” Is Paul being prideful? He is telling people to mimic him, to imitate him. Is Paul prideful, to do that? I believe not. If we have an accurate understanding of Paul in the context, he recognized he was the chief of sinners. He recognized he was not adequate (2 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 5) and his walk was completely dependent on the grace of God. Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 15. Is Paul prideful? Not at all. His walk was a dependent walk. He gave God all the glory.

So then with that in mind, how are we to imitate Paul? How are we to obey this command? How were the Philippians to obey this command to mimic the apostle Paul? How do they do it? Obviously in context, we are to mimic Paul in this deep desire to know Christ and be conformed to the image of Christ. That is the Christian life, right? That is how we should be imitating him in this fight of faith. Remember what we saw earlier, verse 10,

¹⁰ “that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death ¹¹in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. ¹²Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.” [Philippians 3:10-12]

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We were saved (we saw last week in our study) to become like Christ. And Paul understood that and he ran forward and grasped towards that although he knew he would not make it completely until he got to heaven. It is the good fight of faith, trusting Jesus in the context of desiring to be like Him in the circumstances of life.

So then, in what way were these Philippians to imitate Paul or mimic Paul? From Philippians alone, we can see all sorts of ways that we should imitate or mimic the apostle Paul.

In the beginning of Philippians chapter 1, we should imitate his prayer life, 1:3,

³ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all," [Philippians 1:3-4]

We should mimic Paul who was praying for believers and thanking God for believers, right? We should imitate his understanding of truth and God's sovereignty, verse 6.

⁶ "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." [Philippians 1:6]

We should imitate his attitude towards circumstances, right? Chapter 1, verse 12.

¹² "Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, ¹³ so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, ¹⁴ and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear." [Philippians 1:12-14]

We should mimic Paul's attitude towards trials, right? We should mimic Paul's attitude towards suffering, Philippians chapter 1 verse 28.

²⁸ "in no way alarmed by your opponents-- which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God. ²⁹ For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, ³⁰ experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me." [Philippians 1:28-30]

We should mimic Paul's understanding of suffering, right? Just in Philippians alone we have a myriad of things to imitate concerning the apostle Paul. Remember chapter 3,

⁷ "But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss..." [Philippians 3:7a]

We should imitate what Paul considered valuable and what Paul considered as (literally) dung, right? We should imitate his attitude towards life or death. "But to live on in the flesh, this will be fruitful labor

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for me.” To live is to serve the body of Christ. We should imitate that, right? To die is gain, it is to be with Christ. And then we should imitate his concern about false brethren.

² “Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; ³ for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh,” [Philippians 3:2-3]

We are to imitate his passion and mimic it to reach the goal of Christ-likeness.

¹³ “but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” [Philippians 3:13-14]

You were saved to be like Christ, you were saved to be with Christ. Paul pressed forward towards that goal, understood that in the context of all the difficulties. There is a lot to imitate and mimic Paul in, just in Philippians, right? You see, the Scripture is where we gain an understanding of the apostle Paul which we can imitate. So then, if we are to obey this command we need to be in the Word of God, right? If we are to become like Paul in that sense we need to be in the Word of God. And Paul certainly wrote the majority of the New Testament epistles. And secondly, we need to yield to the Spirit of God. We need to trust Him to work through us and empower us to do what He says through His Word.

So here in Scripture we are commanded to join together in imitating Paul. And folks, this becomes a deep problem for you if you do not like the apostle Paul. And I would say to you today if you do not like Paul or believe what he says is not from God then you are not saved. And how do I say that? How can I make that confident assertion that if you do not believe what the apostle Paul said was the Word of God then you are not saved, I can say that because of what John writes. 1 John 4:6, speaking of the apostles who beheld the Lord.

⁶ “We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.” [1 John 4:6]

The church was built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ being the Cornerstone. We have His Word. You do not believe it, you do not listen to it, you are not of Him; that is how we can know clearly. So if you do not like Paul, the real issue is not if you like him or not. The real issue is that sin has caused a separation between you and God. Folks, God chose the apostle Paul to be the inspired example that we are to mimic. And that is what he says here.

Now shouldn't we just follow Jesus? WWJD. Should that not be just what we do? That saying is what we walk around every day with, right? Well, yes, we should look in Scripture and see what Christ would do. Scripture is clear (Ephesians 5:1) that we are to be imitators of God. And then he gives the example of Christ who loved us so much and gave Himself for us. I need to share one caveat. What did Jesus do that we should mimic? Should we mimic every little action and every little response? Or should we mimic His relationship with the Father? He kept entrusting Himself to the One who judges righteously. He was

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obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross. He completely denied self. He did the Father's will and not His own. That is what Jesus did in every circumstance. That is what we mimic and imitate concerning Christ. But that really ups the ante on "What would Jesus do", doesn't it, right?

But folks, here I believe we see a very important principle. Shouldn't we just follow Jesus? But Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit says that we should imitate him. Jesus was perfect, being God in human flesh. He never sinned. He never succumbed to temptation. He never battled His flesh because there was no sin in Him. He was spotless, He was perfect. Therefore since He was perfect and spotless He overcame temptation. He was the perfect Lamb of God who could bear our sins in His body on the cross. And He is also able to come to our aid because He understands our temptations. But in one way He was not like us, right? Paul was like us. Paul had indwelling sin, right? We do too, don't we? Now we are going to see through the example of how someone trusts Christ that we should be like that. And I think we should say it like this: W.W.J.D.T.P. "What would Jesus do through Paul?" What did Jesus do in the apostle Paul when Paul trusted Christ completely, as we should trust Christ completely? And this messes up a lot of people's theology. But here we are told to follow men like us who are beset with sin but overcame by faith in Jesus Christ. If you imitate Paul by the power of the Holy Spirit as revealed in the Scripture, you are imitating Christ. 1 Thessalonians 1:6. Paul says, ⁶ **"You also became** (He says, "Your faith and love, it is an example that you are saved. Faith in Christ, love for the brethren." He says, "You also became...") **imitators of us (mimics) and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,"**[1 Thessalonians 1:6] They mimicked the response of a true believer. 1 Corinthians 11. **"Be imitators of me, (Paul says) just as I also am of Christ."** [1 Corinthians 11:1]

Christ is not taken out the loop when we mimic the apostle Paul. We look at how the apostle Paul completely trusted Christ as revealed in Scripture. And we mimic that trust in Christ, based on the Word of God as revealed through the apostle Paul. Jesus was perfect in humanity; so we need to imitate Paul who was not perfect but was like us. Who fought the good fight through faith in Jesus Christ. Yes, we imitate Christ but we see someone in the person of Paul who is flawed, but who by faith in Jesus Christ overcame and we imitate that. And Paul says, "Become (imperative command) imitators of me." It is a command. So we have got to be in the Word of God to do that. And if we are not in the Word of God, we cannot obey this command. We cannot follow his example if we do not know what Paul was like from the Word of God, right? If I do not know about the apostle Paul how can I imitate him and obey that command?

So as we continue now, he is going to talk about the fact that we go one step farther than this. Verse 17 again. ¹⁷**Brethren, join in following my example,** (that is that "mimic") **and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us."** [Philippians 3:17] He expands this command. Mimic Paul together. But also observe those who walk according to the pattern that is in them. That word "skopeo," it is "scope out", "look for," "look at," "keep a watchful eye on those who are like Paul, who are like Christ." Observe them. Keep a watchful eye for that kind of believer and imitate their walk. This idea of "walk" here is Scripture, "walk" just speaks of a life. The word is used to speak of a life, a walk. Those who walk according to the pattern. The word "pattern" is "tupos". It speaks of the exact impression made by a blow of a hammer. This exact impression you see as Christ is manifest in the apostle Paul and

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others who are following Christ, follow it! Exactly. Keep your eyes peeled for that. Keep your eyes peeled for those who are like that.

Folks, you are not going to find people who are like that in churches that do not teach the Word of God. Because people who are like that want to hear the Word of God, they want to grow in the Word of God, they want to be like Christ. Paul is saying, "imitate me", and I believe as revealed in his letters, "and watch those who walk like us." Watch those, scope them out. Paul is putting skin on the command to imitate people the Word of God has changed and is changing. 1 Thessalonians 2 verse 13, one of my favorite verses.

¹³ "And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. ¹⁴For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews," [1 Thessalonians 2:13-14]

The Word performed its work in the Thessalonians and what happened? They became imitators of the churches who really did trust Christ. That is the way we should walk. Paul reveals to Timothy that he had mimicked Paul. He shares that in areas. We see specific areas. I will read this to you. 2 Timothy 3:10. He is speaking to Timothy. ¹⁰ **"But you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, ¹¹ persecutions, and sufferings..." [2 Timothy 3:10-11a]**

Timothy imitated those things. 2 Timothy 2:22: ²² **"Now flee from youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart." [2 Timothy 2:22]**

Folks, one side note to this command. You cannot imitate or scope out others if you are not in the body of Christ. If you are forsaking the assembling and you just come whenever you want. You just think it is my own will, yes, my will not God's will in whenever I want to be around the body of Christ, then folks you cannot obey this command. You cannot be scoping out continually, looking for those who are following Christ and seeing the life of Christ manifest. If we are going to follow Jesus, we must imitate Paul as revealed in the Scriptures. The writer of Hebrews writes in Hebrews 13 verse 7, ⁷ **"Remember those who led you, (how did they lead you?) who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, (mimic) imitate their faith." [Hebrews 13:7]**

Do not mimic their actions, imitate their faith in Christ, what they know, the truth about the Word of God that they have applied to their lives through the Spirit of God which has changed their lives. Imitate that. That is what we should be doing. And how are we doing? It is a struggle. If you are a true believer, it is not automatic. We default to the flesh, we default to the image of this world. But we should be, instead of conformed to this world, renewed in the spirit of our minds, transformed. How are you doing in this battle? Who do you follow and imitate? It is a football player who says they are a Christian, is it some famous Christian guy or whatever? Who do you imitate? Is it your parents or is it your brothers or

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sisters? Who do you imitate? Here we are commanded to keep choosing to observe and keep company with those who are mimicking the apostle Paul's faith in Christ. We need to do that, right? That is a command. "Become imitators."

Now, at this point we have two rationales for the walk. One negative and one positive. Two rationales for the walk. We are going to see, Lord-willing, the negative rationale but it is linked and coupled with the positive rationale which Lord-willing we will see next week. Which is the fact that Christ is coming. He is coming to complete the job, to make us like Him. But here we have, first of all, the alternative. Yes, we are to mimic the apostle Paul but there is an alternative. There is an alternative and we need to beware of this alternative. Verse 18.

¹⁸ For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, ¹⁹ whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. [Philippians 3:18-19]

He is saying, "mimic us, mimic people like us," and why? Because there are a bunch of people who do not walk this way. *For*, he is going to explain, right? For many walk, many walk. Many walk, as we will see, effectively of a lifestyle that makes them enemies of the cross of Christ. Again, one truth we must come to grips with as believers, what I shared in the beginning of the message. Matthew 7:13, there are few that find it, (speaking of people coming to faith). Few. Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed." That is the smallest of other seeds. Many will follow this other way. The plain fact is that there are very few true believers. But folks, there are a lot of *so-called* believers. And there are a lot of, as one pastor writes, *make-believers*.

So then, who is Paul speaking of as the many here in this passage? I do not believe he is speaking of the world in general here. I believe he is speaking of the many who claim to follow Christ but their walks betray such a claim. I believe that is what he is talking about. Remember, he is contrasting between true brethren who are not dependant on themselves. They do not trust in their flesh. Versus a contrast of those who do, to be warned of. The fruit of false teachers (and there are many Scripture reveals) are false brethren (who are also many). Did not Jesus say that many would come to Him on that day? Many. And say, "Lord, Lord." Many are going to come on that day and think that they are following the Lord. They think they followed the Lord. He says, "Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness." Destruction awaits those. There are all kinds of verses concerning "the many." I shared what Jesus said in Matthew 7. Paul speaks of the many in 2 Corinthians 2:17. ¹⁷ **"For we are not like many, peddling the word of God..." [2 Corinthians 2:17a]** Titus chapter 1 verses 7-11, speaking of the need of elders to protect the body of Christ. He says they should be,

⁹ "holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. ¹⁰ For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers..." [Titus 1:9-10a]

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Many. John speaks of the many. 1 John 2:18, “many antichrists have arisen”. 1 John 4:1, ¹ **“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” [1 John 4:1]** There is even more in John, I will not even share that. Just go through 2 John; you will see it. Peter speaks of the many false teachers and the many who will follow them. 2 Peter, verse 1-2.

“⁴But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers (prophets in the past, false teachers in the present) among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. (Verse 2 of 2 Peter 2) ²And many will follow their sensuality, (their sensuality, it is just their self-focus, right? Fulfilling their own desires) and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned;” [2 Peter 2:1-2]

Many. There is a lot. There are a lot of false teachers, a lot of false brethren. Many. He says, verse 18, back to our passage. ¹⁸ “For many walk, (I think he is comparing a walk, it is a walk of faith. They think it is a walk of faith. It is false faith. He says, many walk...) of whom I often told you, (the world walks that way by nature. He is not saying I have often told you about the world. I think he is talking about false brethren) and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ,” [Philippians 3:18]

Paul was very concerned about this, and he says, “I told you often and I even tell you now weeping.” Folks, when is the last time you wept over the state of the church? People who claim to be believers and, as we will see, live lives in accordance with what Paul will say here. They are not mimicking Christ. They are not pressing forward towards the goal. They are not focused on Christ-likeness. They are focused on themselves. The many look like they are following Jesus, but ultimately they are not mimicking Paul and those like him. And I believe if you do not scope out those who are truly following Christ, you are just going to follow anybody. Paul says, “Scope out, look for.” Paul was continually concerned about them. You can read Acts 20, day and night he warned the Ephesian elders for three years with tears.

Now why is Paul weeping? Obviously for the damage they do to brethren but their destiny also. It is a terrible destiny. First of all, we see they are enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁸ “For many walk, (verse 18) of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ...” What does he mean, enemies of the cross of Christ? Well, our text implies they are not self-stated enemies. They are not saying, “I oppose Jesus Christ and the cross.” But by their walk they are enemies of the cross of Christ. Although claiming to be believers in some way, their walk places them in opposition to what Christ accomplished on the cross. What did Christ accomplish on the cross? He accomplished redemption. Folks, that is the walk of false brethren and what it accomplishes. It puts them in opposition. And I hear this all the time, people who see other people’s lives who claim to be believers and they do not want any part of that. They become enemies of the cross of Christ. They claim

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to believe everything about Jesus, they have bumper stickers and shirts and yet when you look at their walk, as Paul says here, as he often told them, they are enemies.

One pastor writes, "Beloved, this is such a ringing constant theme in the New Testament that you almost feel like you're in a revolving door on this subject. We must beware of the enemies who masquerade as friends. That's the idea here. He has to tell the Philippians that they are enemies of the cross of Christ because they're very subtle. And frankly, folks, the church lacks discernment. I continue to be absolutely astounded at the stuff and at the people that Christians will follow because they're so undiscerning."

It is a sad statement. Enemies of the cross of Christ. Well, what about their walk? What about their walk? We are going to see instead of being upward-called, it actually leads downward to hell. It leads to destruction. Verse 18.

¹⁸For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, ¹⁹whose end (Verse 19) is destruction..." [Philippians 3:18-19a] That is bad. When all else is said and done, the end result of this walk is destruction. We know that Peter says that this present heavens and earth are being reserved for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. If you do not like that, that is too bad. God says it is going to happen. God says it is going to happen. And God is gracious enough to warn you before that time so that you will be convicted of your sin and cry out for a Savior, Jesus Christ. **¹⁸For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, ¹⁹whose end is destruction..." [Philippians 3:18-19a]**

Folks, you want to play games with church? You want to go and play games with Christianity? You want to go to church and then follow your own desires all week long? Folks, the end is destruction. If that is your true nature underneath, it is destruction. Many walk this way. It is terrible. There is a certain terrifying expectation of judgment. Do not walk this way. Mimic Paul. Do not walk that way. Now we see their walk described because he explains it now in verse 18 again

¹⁸For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, (now three things) ¹⁹whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things." [Philippians 3:18-19]

First of all, their flesh is their god. It is literally, "Their belly is their god." Well, what does that mean? Their natural human desires direct their life. Their desire for food or whatever it might be, for shelter, the natural human desires that we all have are their god. They direct their life. That is the one element he says first of all. Bob read it in Romans chapter 8, a portion there. Chapter 8, verse 5, a little bit before there. **⁵For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. [Romans 8:5]**

Now, do we not set our mind at times to get dressed? Do we not do those things? Yes. We do not focus on those things, our minds are not set on them. We trust the Lord to provide those things for us. We seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and these things will be provided. Their god is there

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desires. Folks, is your god your desires? When it comes down to it, the one who controls you all day long? Is it your desires? That is an evidence you are on the path to destruction. Paul says true believers put no confidence in their flesh. No confidence in the flesh.

What else do they do? They glory in the things that shame them. What does this mean? Now, it is very technical in Greek here but it doesn't say specifically that they glory in their shame. They do not glory in their shame like the pagan who glories in certain shameful things, right? Glories in those things and gives hearty approval to other people. That is not what this text is saying. It is very complex but they boast in the things that they should be ashamed in. They should be ashamed in it. The things they boast about actually are shameful.

Now, what does he mean? This is hard to understand. You are probably saying, "I do not understand. Can you give me an example?" Folks, false believers do not glory in outright sin. Where they find their glory in is where they actually should be ashamed. Well, what do I mean by that? In context with Philippians, what did Paul boast in before? His religiousness and his own abilities and his own confidence. In context, they glory in their own abilities, confidence, they glory in their own understanding. The things a believer should be ashamed of. We should be ashamed of trusting in ourselves, right? Should we be ashamed of that? We should, right, as believers? We should be ashamed when we live lives that do not trust in Christ. We glory in those things. Folks, many churches glory in their ability to win the lost through systems rather than through faith in Christ. They should be ashamed of that. Paul said, "We put no confidence in the flesh", true believers. Certain so-called Christian radio shows glory in their ability to help marriages and families in legal issues but you do not hear the Word of God. Through psychology and man's wisdom with a verse thrown in here and there. They should be ashamed of that. They should be ashamed. I heard one show the other day talking about communication between spouses, a half an hour long. It had nothing to do with the Word of God. There is so much in the Bible about communication. There is so much Scripture. True believers glory in Christ Jesus. Do you recognize your total dependence on Christ, your total inadequacy and trust in Him and then He lives through you? You cannot do anything else than to glory in Him. You see Him working in you. But make-believers glory in results and externals and things rather than in Christ. Lastly, it all comes together in this last phrase. As we see, they set their mind on earthly things.

¹⁸For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, ¹⁹whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, (not "glory in their shame," but "whose glory is in their shame") who set their minds on earthly things." [Philippians 3:18-19]

Or literally, "continually think about the things of earth." The mindset of this said false fake believer in the world (because they are both condemned, right?) is continually thinking about the things of the earth. Mind is fully consumed with the things of earth. What are the things of earth? They are the things that have to do with me. My desires, my will, my life, all of those things. That is "the things of earth", right? The mind of the unbeliever is continually consumed with self. Everything revolves around self. The

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things below, which have nothing to do with Christ and the Word. Folks, we as believers are commanded to be setting our mind on the things above. Colossians chapter 3.

¹ “If then you have been raised up with Christ, (If you have been saved. If that is the case with you, then...) keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. [Colossians 3:1-2]

(As we will see later on in this chapter, we are destined for eternity and Christ is coming for us. We should be focused on those things, not the temporal things which are passing. Yes, God will take care of us in terms of food and all those different things and the basic things of life. But within those basic things of life we should be setting our minds on the things above. And he says, “Set your mind on things above, not on the things that are on the earth.”

³ For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.” [Colossians 3:3-4]

We are commanded not to set our mind on the things of earth. And if you set your mind on the things of earth continually, you are on the path to destruction. Paul says, “Do not walk like them; mimic us.”

Folks, that means that we are tempted to walk that way, right? That means we are tempted throughout our lives to walk that way. The easy path. To not trust Christ, to just fulfill our own needs as they come along, right? Rather than believing and waiting on the Lord and allowing Him to do it through us. But Paul is exhorting us to not do that. We are continually exhorted to set our mind on the things above. And if you are truly saved and Christ is your life, we are commanded to set our mind on Him. Folks, it is a battle, it is the good fight of faith. By and large, that is the way we should function, by and large. We should by and large be setting our mind on the things above. And true believers do, and false believers do not. That is what he is saying here: they do not. They set their minds on earthly things. That is just it. And I have talked to many people who are so-called Christians who are focused on earthly things. They are not focused on the things above which are revealed in the Word of God. They could care less about the Word of God. It is more about whatever ministry or whatever it is or whatever situation. Folks, it breaks my heart and I hope it breaks yours.

I want to ask you, “Are you consumed with the things of earth?” If so, you have a major problem. And God is a gracious God to prompt you, to convict us. He is saying, “The norm is that false believers set their mind on earthly things; true believers on the heavenly.” Where do you stand today? What is your walk like? Now, churches that faithfully preach the Word in obedience to the Lord are setting their mind on the things above. If you want to hear the Word of God, if you want to set your mind on the things above you are going to be listening to sermons, you are going to be in your Bible, you are going to want to hear the Word of God. You are not going to be pushing it aside. “Ahhhhh, I’ve got to get out of here; that sermon is too long.” You are going to want to listen. What is the reason we say the sermon is too long and we want to get out of here? Because we are setting our minds on earthly things, right?

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Paul was exhorting them to walk like him. Focused on the things above. Focused on Christ, becoming like Him and knowing Him. Seeing every event in this life in the context of knowing and growing in Christ. That is setting your mind on things above. Versus the alternative which is the road to destruction where they see everything in light of themselves, their circumstances, self-focused with the end of destruction.

Well, who were these false brethren, destined for destruction at this time in Philippi? It is the same false brethren we have these days. We have the Christ-plus-ers and the Christ-minus-ers. We have those who take Christ and say you have got to add these things to it, that were the Judaizers. We have the Christ-minus-ers that, "Yes, come trust Christ yet do anything you want; it is okay how you live. Just come as you are and stay as you are" basically. And those are the anti-gnomians and the anti-gnostics. It is the same thing, the same attacks. The Christ-plus-ers and the Christ-minus-ers. And we do not know specifically what group it was he was talking about here. But the bottom line is that Paul commands us to become mimics of him.

That is the bottom line of this passage and here is the motivation. There are a bunch who are not and the end is destruction. That is a motivating factor, right? And next week we will see another motivating factor: Christ is coming for us. And He is going to change us. And that ought to motivate us.

Where does your mind dwell? Does it dwell on earthly things? Do you go to a church that sets its mind on earthly things? Do you listen to radio shows that set their mind on earthly things? This could be an evidence that you are on the road to destruction. It could be. God is gracious to warn you today. If you do not have a desire to be in the Word of God, maybe something has drastically gone wrong. Maybe you were not born again, you were stillborn. Maybe you have never truly come to faith in Jesus Christ. God will judge you for your sin, but God is a loving, gracious Father who sent His Son to die for you. If you trust in Jesus Christ, repenting of your sin, believing in Jesus Christ as Lord, calling out to Him to save you. Not from your marriage problems, not from your work problems but from your sin problem. He will save you. He is a gracious God.

Now, as we conclude, remember the flow of thought here in this passage. Paul is giving true believers a rationale for their walk, to walk like him. Imitate Paul, carefully watch others who do the same because there are those who walk in a different manner and the end is destruction. The walk is serious and it is a reflection of your true nature. Do not walk that way. Let me ask you today, "Does your Christian walk... Who is a Christian in here? I am a Christian. Does your walk reflect the apostle Paul or does your end evidence impending destruction?"

Folks, we are tempted with the latter all the time if we are a true believer. But by and large, it should reflect the apostle Paul's desire of be in the Word to know Christ. And we are being exhorted to do that. Some of us have been drawn back into worldly mindsets, we have been hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, been conformed to the world by default because we have not been in the Word of God. Oh believer, just be graciously forgiven, just tell the Lord you are sorry. Do not have a worldly sorrow that just is upset about the affects on you but Godly sorrow that leads to repentance. Graciously forgiven.

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Believer, let what you have heard from the Word today draw your heart unto Christ. Strive to be like Christ, to mimic Christ, to look at the apostle Paul in Scripture and to be like him. Scope out others who are doing that.

I want to close with what I started with.

¹³ “Enter by the narrow gate; (that gate being Him- He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father but by Him) for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. ¹⁴For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it.” [Matthew 7:13-14]

Prayer

Father, I thank You for Your Word. We know this negative portion is hard to hear, but yet You have ordained it, You have put it in Your Word, and You want us to know it. And You have commanded us to become imitators of Paul and others like him. And to scope out those who are like that. Father, may we be able to see the many and not walk that way. Not associate with them, but share the gospel with them. May we look for those of like mind, fellowship with those together. Father, thank You for Your Word and I thank You that this passage does not end here, that it reveals that Your Son is coming and that He is going to change us because we are citizens of heaven. He is going to make us like Him. The goal that we press forward to is going to happen. And, Father, in the meantime, Lord, may we imitate Your Son and the inspired examples that You have given in Scripture. We pray this now in Jesus's Name.

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