

Who will you Follow?

Phil 3:17-21

Feb 7, 2021

Phil 3:17-21 Brethren join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. 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. 20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

Introduction:

The way we live and what we do influences people even if we don't intend to do so. Paul tells the Philippians to follow his example and take notice of those who do not walk accordingly. Paul is saying "listen to my words," but also, "follow my example." Or, "Become fellow-imitators with me in imitating Jesus Christ" (Bengel).

We must take notice of those who walk with Jesus Christ, who are examples of integrity and imitate the great traits of their lives.

When Paul told the Philippians to follow his example, he wasn't claiming to be perfect. He had just declared that:

His righteousness was by faith in Christ and not by works (v. 9).

He had not arrived at perfection (maturity) yet (v. 12).

He had not yet achieved all that Christ had for him (v. 13).

What then did Paul mean? He was an example in:

Forgetting things that were past (v. 13).

Reaching forward to the things that yet lay ahead (v. 13).

Striving to win the prize to reach the high call of God in Christ Jesus (v. 14).

"Brethren join in following my example" (v. 17)

Paul knew that his life was to be an example, that he was to be a role model for others to follow.

(1Cor 4:16; 11:1; 2Thes 3:7)

His followers (disciples) were to likewise lead others by their example.

1Thes 1:6- You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

1Pt 5:3 (elders are not to) lord will it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

1Tim 4:12 ... show yourself an example of those who believe. (Titus 2:7)

Many walk ... they are enemies of the cross of Christ (v. 18)

Who are these people? They are people who live a gluttonous and immoral life and use their so-called Christianity to justify themselves. They were possibly:

Gnostics who intellectualized Christianity and made a kind of philosophy out of it. They thought that gluttony, adultery, homosexuality and drunkenness were of no importance because they affect only the body which is of no importance.

There was another party of Gnostics who held a different doctrine. They argued that a man cannot be called complete until he experienced everything that life had to offer both good and bad.

Therefore, they said, it was a man's duty to experience the depths of sin just as much as to scale the heights of virtue.

Within the church there were two sets of people to whom these accusations might apply:

Those who distort the principle of Christian liberty - turning liberty into license for sin.

Gal 5:13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Those who distorted grace - since God's love is all forgiving, a man could sin as he liked and not worry.

Rom 6:1-2 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? (Rom 6:15)

We don't know for certain who these enemies are, but note what is said about them:

1. Their end is destruction (apoleia) which means perdition, destroyed, or slayed; to lose one's well-being; to be wasted and ruined and given a worthless existence.

2Thes 1:7-9 ... when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, (Mat 25:25-46; Heb 10:29-30)

2. Their God is their belly, that is, their appetite, sensuality, desire for physical pleasure of this world.

1Jn 2:15-17 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

Eph 4:17-19 So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; 19 and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

3. They glory (boast) in their shame (sin). They pride themselves in their: authority and power, comfort, drunkenness, gluttony, partying, possessions, etc.

Col 3:5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. (Eph 5:3-6; Gal 2:20; 5:24)

4. They set their minds on earthly things.

The focus of the believer's life is to be on Christ and the purposes of God. It is true that we must also give attention to our jobs, families and to other good and beneficial pursuits of life, but the underlying focus of everything we do is to be on Jesus Christ and His eternal purposes.

Our citizenship is in heaven

This is a picture that the Philippians could understand, being a Roman colony. These colonies were in strategic military places. The citizens there were mostly soldiers who served their time (21 years) and were rewarded with full citizenship.

The great characteristic of these colonies was that, wherever they were, they remained fragments of Rome. Roman dress was worn; Roman magistrates governed; the Latin language was spoken; Roman justice was administered; Roman morals were observed. Even in the ends of the earth they remained unshakably Romans.

Paul says to the Philippians, "Just as a Roman columnist never forget that they belonged to Rome, you must never forget that you are citizens of heaven; and your conduct must match your citizenship." [From Letters to the Philippians, by Barclay, pg. 69]

The believer's life is to be heaven centered, for his citizenship is in heaven.

Heb 12:22-24 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels ... (Heb 11:9-10, 13-16; 1Pt 1:3-4)

Christians **eagerly wait for** (the return of) **a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ**

The word "wait" is the translation of a Greek word made up of three words put together, the word, "to receive," which speaks of a welcoming or appropriating reception such as is tendered to a friend who comes to visit one;

the word "off," speaking here of the withdrawal of one's attention from other objects,

and the word "out," used here in a perfective sense which intensifies the already existing meaning of the word.

The composite word speaks of an attitude of intense yearning and eager waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus into the air to take His Bride to heaven with Him, the attention being withdrawn from all else and concentrated upon the Lord Jesus. [From Wuest's Word Studies]

(see also Mt 24:44; Lk 19:13; Jn 14:1-2; 1Cor 1:7; 1Thes 4:16-18; Titus 2:12-13; 1Jn 2:24)

Everything will change when Jesus returns

"who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself" (v. 21)

1Cor 15:51-58 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. 55 "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord. (1Cor 15:42-44; Rom 8:18-24)

Note: Our identity and confession as believer's in Christ

I count all things as loss for the sake of Christ (Phil 3:7).

My greatest desire in life is to know Jesus (Phil 3:9-10).

I choose to forget the past and reach forward to what God has for me (Phil 3:13-14).

I am a citizen of heaven (Phil 3:20).

When Jesus returns I will have a glorified body (Phil 3:21).