

**Philippians 3:8-21**  
**Walking by the Same Rule**  
*Let us walk by the same rule – v. 16*

In v. 16 Paul refers to the gospel as *a rule*. It's a rule to walk by or a rule to live by. In just one other instance you find Paul referring to the gospel as a rule. That reference is Gal. 6:16. Listen to Paul's statement beginning with v. 14 *But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. 15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. 16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.*

The *rule* in this case could be called the rule of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. It's the rule of the doctrine of justification by faith. It's the rule that eliminates the distinction between Jew and Gentile and makes reference to those that are new creatures in Christ. Those that walk according to that rule, the rule of the cross or the rule of the gospel are the ones that make up the true Israel of God.

Albert Barnes who lived and ministered in the middle 1800's makes a comment on this rule that I find to be very much applicable to our day. He writes:

“This is a most wise and valuable rule, and a rule that would save much difficulty and contention in the church, if it were honestly applied. The meaning is this — that though there might be different degrees of attainment among Christians, and different views on many subjects, yet there were points in which all could agree; there were attainments which they all had made, and in reference to them they should walk in harmony and love. It might be that some had made much greater advances than others. They had more elevated views of religion; they had higher knowledge; they were nearer perfection. Others had had less advantages of education and instruction, had had fewer opportunities of making progress in the divine life, and would less understand the higher mysteries of the Christian life. They might not see the truth or propriety of many things which those in advance of them would see clearly. But it was not worthwhile to quarrel about these things. There should be no angry feeling, and no fault-finding on either side. There were many things in which they could see alike, and where there were no jarring sentiments. In those things they could walk harmoniously; and they who were in advance of others should not complain of their less informed brethren as lacking all evidence of piety; nor should those who had not made such advances complain of those before them as fanatical, or as disposed to push things to extremes.”

I would have to agree with Albert Barnes that this is a most wise and valuable rule. I would go a step further and say that it's a rule that only a born again Christian will live by. And even in the case of born again Christians it must be a rule that they must hold to their lives to check at times whether or not they are walking by that rule. Paul has already said back 2:21 *For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's*. He's making that point again now in v. 18 when he writes: *(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. Isn't such a statement tragic and ironic. Paul is not speaking about a few, about a tiny minority within the church. He's saying that there are many that come into this category of walking in such a way that it's as if they're enemies of Christ rather than those that win Christ.*

Paul's is calling therefore for the right kind of unity among the people of God and for that unity to be based on the right kind of walking and minding the same things. You could say he's calling for apostolic unity when he exhorts us in vv. 16,17: *let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.* Walking according to apostolic example and walking after the same rule or minding the same things – I want to call your attention to this *rule* this morning since Paul places an emphasis on it.

Our theme, then, is simply this – walking by the same rule, walking by the rule of the gospel. Simply put:

### We Must Walk by the Rule of the Gospel

If you would walk by the rule of the gospel, then:

#### I. You Must Know the Rule

I suppose I could make an excuse out of this point to preach the message I delivered last week because the rule that Paul calls on the Philippians to walk by could be described simply as the rule of winning Christ.

*I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ* Paul writes back in v. 6. And as we saw last week the idea of winning Christ involves striving to know Christ *that I may know him* v. 10. It involves knowing the power of Christ *that I may know him and the power of his resurrection*; It involves the pursuit of our sanctification – *knowing the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.*

Last week we considered that in order to win Christ you must assign the proper priority to winning Christ. Everything must be subordinate to winning Christ so much so that everything is counted as loss and but dung in comparison. There is nothing that this world affords us that can compare with winning Christ. No attainment in this world can compare with it; no amount of wealth or riches can compare with it; no relationship can be compared with it.

Christ himself said *He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me* (Mt. 10:37). Why is it that a son or a daughter would leave family and friends and familiar surroundings and things that are comfortable in order to become a missionary in a far away land? The answer should be that they leave all because that's the way they win Christ. They must answer the call of Christ in order to win Christ.

Pastor Cairns use to counsel those that came to him for guidance in seeking the Lord's will by telling them that when it comes to considering a course of action whether it be a call to missionary service or a call to the ministry or whether it be the matter of seeking a spouse or seeking a career or vocation – indeed his counsel could be applied to any major decision a Christian is contemplating – the way to discern God's will is to ask simply *is this the way forward in my walk with the Lord*. He could just have easily utilized the words of Phil. 3:8 and had the Christian ask himself *is this the way I win Christ*.

I remember the very first marriage I had the privilege of officiating. It had taken quite some time for this man to overcome all his doubts and fears and apprehensions about marriage. When I counseled him I said to him in effect: is marriage the way forward in your walk with the Lord. Will this marriage you're contemplating lead you to win Christ or could it cost you Christ. He came to see eventually that such a question was a no-brainer – marrying this girl was the best thing in the world not simply for his happiness or well-being, but it was the best thing for him spiritually speaking. It was the way for him to win Christ.

I remember contemplating my own call to the ministry and call to pursue the ministry in the FPC. Our seminary program was brand new. It was in its formative stages. Because of the intensive nature of those studies especially in those days Dr. Cairns did not think it would be possible for a student to work a full time job and still pursue the intensive training course for the ministry. The thing that compelled me to pursue it, though it was deemed impossible, was that I had to go this route in order to win Christ. The failure to pursue what was deemed impossible would have cost me Christ. I had to rise to whatever the challenges were because it was the way forward in my walk with the Lord.

I remember when the Lord called John Greer to leave an established and flourishing church in Northern Ireland in order to become the Pastor of a work that was all but dead. The Lord so worked in his heart that he had to pursue that path in order to win Christ. For him not to have answered that call would have cost him the closeness of Christ.

So the rule is very simple – it's the rule of winning Christ. It's the rule of counting everything but loss in order to have more of Christ. It's the rule of knowing him and attaining more of his fellowship and power. We also saw in our study last week that not only must the right priority be assigned to winning Christ but apathy must never be allowed when it comes to winning Christ.

Verse 13 *Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended*. If ever a man could have counted himself to have apprehended it would have been Paul. Who knew Christ better? Who lived by his power more or who was more conformed to the image of his death than Paul? Paul knew him intimately but Paul also recognized that there was more of Christ to win. One of the factors that holds so many back from winning more of Christ is the notion that one has arrived. You have not arrived. The glory of heaven itself, I doubt, will suffice to make one think he's arrived.

The rule, then, is the rule of winning Christ. Look at the way Paul makes it clear that this is the rule. He has just described the rule as winning Christ, knowing Christ, apprehending Christ, pressing for the mark of the high calling of Christ. After he's set forth all these particulars he says in v. 15 *Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded*. The word *perfect* here is not a reference to sinless perfection, it's a reference rather to sincerity or genuineness. It can also be translated by the word *mature*.

Let as many as are mature but thus minded. And then v. 16 *Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing*. Let those that are genuine and sincere who are mature in the faith be of the same mind as Paul when it comes to Paul's quest for Christ. The Christian, simply put, is to mind the matter of pursuing Christ. He's to walk by the rule of seeking more of Christ. His highest priority must be to win Christ.

If we would walk by this rule, therefore, this apostolic rule, or this gospel rule the first thing we must do is know the rule. The matter becomes even more important when you consider next that in order to walk by the rule of the gospel:

## II. You Must Avoid What is Contrary to that Rule

Paul makes a very sober and heart-searching parenthetical statement in vv. 18,19. Listen to the words of v. 18 (*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*): This is one of those verses that must be looked at carefully in terms of its translation.

It's easy you see to look at the verse and come to the wrong conclusion that Paul is dealing with devious and deliberate apostates who make it their mission in life to undermine the gospel. And then you conclude that you know that you're not a devious and deliberate apostate seeking to undermine the gospel so this verse has nothing to do with me. This is why I say the translation of the verse is important. You'll notice in the AV that the words *that they are* are in italics which means that they are supplied by the translators to give the sense of the verse.

Young's literal translation of the verse leaves the italicized words out and reads this way: *for many walk of whom many times I told you — and now also weeping tell — the enemies of the cross of the Christ!* The AV italicized words make an indicative statement about these kinds of professors of Christ. It very matter of factly states that they are enemies of the gospel.

The thing that leads me away from that interpretation of the reading is the fact that Paul says there are many of them. *For many walk, of whom I have told you often...* I think it's important to focus on the word *walk*. If you take out the parenthetical phrases that follow you would read the verse like this: *For many walk... the enemies of the gospel*. The exegetical question that needs to be answered, therefore, is what is the connection between the walk of the people being viewed in this verse with the idea of being enemies of the gospel?

I think the ESV captures that connection with its translation which reads like this: *For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.* You see the difference of ideas between this translation and the AV? The AV states it or at least strongly implies that the people in view in this verse are categorically enemies of the gospel. The ESV presents a picture of those that you wouldn't say categorically or indicatively are enemies of the gospel but they are walking as if they were enemies of the gospel.

They've being inconsistent, in other words, with the rule of the gospel that Paul has described in the previous verses. They are not walking by the rule of winning Christ, they are walking by a different rule and by walking by this different rule they certainly come across as the enemies of the gospel. And so the question that needs to be considered is what kind of rule do they walk by that makes them walk as enemies of the gospel?

And that's not a hard question to answer. Paul describes their walk in v. 19. Look at how they're described: *their God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.* They live for their appetites and they abuse the grace of God by making it an excuse for sin and the descriptive phrase that really strikes home is how they mind earthly things. They're worldly, on other words.

They don't walk by the apostolic rule that Paul has described, they walk with their focus on the things of this world. Everything is geared to the here and now. Earthly things is certainly a broad category that can include things that in and of themselves might be perfectly legitimate. Being mindful of earthly things can mean being mindful of your career or your vocation or it can mean being mindful of your possessions or it can mean being mindful of earthly relationships.

These are all legitimate things to mind but when they come to dominate your heart and govern the way you walk then you sadly and ironically position yourself to walk as an enemy of Christ rather than a follower of Christ. Notice the contrast that Paul expresses in the last two verses of the chapter, vv. 20,21 *For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: 21 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.*

You're not to be tied to earthly things, you're to see beyond them and above them. You're on your way to be glorified; you're on your way to perfect conformity to Christ; you're on your way, you could say, to *a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God* (Heb. 11:10); *a better country, that is an heavenly* (Heb. 11:16) and because of this focus on such a city or such a country that same verse in Hebrews says *wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.*

But what of those who mind earthly things? Are they truly saved? Verse 20 says that *they're end is destruction.* This statement might be the reason behind the AV translation that says indicatively that they are the enemies of Christ. Are they enemies or are they just walking as enemies? If they are categorically real enemies then their end is eternal

destruction. If they're walking as enemies but are not categorically enemies then they're destruction may amount to something less than eternal destruction. Their destruction may take the form of making shipwreck of their faith and leaving them so spiritually destitute that they deprive themselves of the peace and joy and assurance that ought to be their portion and on that judgment day they are saved the way Paul describes 1Cor. 3:15 *If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*

Do you begin to see the contrast between the two rules that come out in this chapter of Philippians? There's the apostolic rule of the gospel which is simply the rule of winning Christ or there's the rule of minding earthly things which leads to destruction of one kind or another. I wonder this morning what rule you're living by?

Let me finish this message by pressing the matter to your heart by way of application. We've seen that in order to walk by this rule we must know the rule and we must know what runs contrary to the rule. Consider with me finally that to walk by the rule of the gospel:

### III. You Must Ask God to Search Your Heart

Look at the words of v. 15 *Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.* When you consider the contrast between the two rules we've been considering, the apostolic rule of the gospel and the rule of minding earthly things there is certainly good reason to have God search your heart as to what rule you're really walking by.

Would you notice that when it comes to the wrong rule of minding earthly things that Paul says (*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.* He doesn't say that just a few walk this way does he? He doesn't say that it's just an isolated individual here and there that walks as if he's an enemy of Christ. There are many that walk this way.

I cross referenced earlier Paul's statement back in 2:21 *For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.* In this verse *many* is *all*. Doesn't that indicate to you that worldliness is a very common propensity among the followers of Christ?

It's been a long time since Dr. Cairns spoke here in Indianapolis but I've never forgotten the thrust of the last message he preached here. He noted the things that afflict the church of Christ these days. He mentioned ecumenical apostasy but followed that up by saying that ecumenical apostasy is not what's destroying the church. He mentioned rampant immorality, especially the rise of homosexuality but followed that up by saying that homosexuality is not what's destroying the church. What's destroying the church? – he then asked. The thing that's destroying the church is worldliness among the people of God, or to use the terminology of Paul – *minding earthly things* is what's destroying the church.

It's destroying the power of the church and it's destroying the testimony of the church for when the people of God are walking by the rule of minding earthly things they can't be

distinguished from the world and when you can't be distinguished from the world you can't be distinguished from the enemies of the cross. So the fact that there are many and not just an isolated few that come into this category should lead you to pray – Lord, search my heart and reveal to me whether or not I'm heavenly minded or minding earthly things.

The nature of the destruction you face should also lead to seek God in this matter. I described two scenarios already pertaining to that destruction. It could be everlasting destruction or it could be spiritual destruction that doesn't lead to a loss of salvation but leads to being saved so as by fire.

I'm reminded of a statement Paul makes in 1Cor. 15 that pertains to those that deny the resurrection but I think could be readily applied to what we're considering here this morning. 1Co 15:19 *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.* Isn't that a telling statement? Paul is describing one who has hope in Christ. Such a person names the name of Christ and would profess to be a Christian. Yet he can't get beyond this life meaning the here and now life. He's minding earthly things. He has some kind of hope in Christ but he's devoted to earthly things.

How does Paul describe him? He's most miserable. I wonder this morning – are you most miserable? Here we've been studying Paul's epistle to the Philippians with all its emphasis on joy and rejoicing but maybe all this study has done has been to magnify your misery. The cause may not be hard to trace. You're not walking by the apostolic rule of the gospel that compels you to win Christ, you're minding earthly things instead.

Your misery is a part of your destruction and so long as your focus is on the temporal and perishing things of this world you'll only go from bad to worse. We're told you see by John in his epistle that we're to *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love 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 pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*

What rule are you walking by today? Paul wept when he thought upon how many were not walking by the rule of the gospel, the rule of winning Christ, but were minding earthly things and were given to fleshly appetites. How much more do you suppose it moves Christ to weep when he beholds those that walk as if they were his enemies rather than his dear children?

Paul tells us to walk by the same rule and mind the same things and then he says in v. 15 *Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.* Will you open your heart to what God will reveal to you today? May he restrain and convict and renew and transform you in your thinking so that you're walking by the rule of winning Christ.