

## Philippians 3:17–21

<sup>17</sup> Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.

<sup>18</sup> 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:

<sup>19</sup> whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.

<sup>20</sup> For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

<sup>21</sup> who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

### *The Importance of Being an Example Philippians 3:17-21*

#### INTRO:

Many in our day try to tell us God is not concerned with how we live. However, Paul's words in the Philippian letter disagrees with this supposition. In our text for this morning, the Apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit wrote about the importance of being an example.

***I. Follow My Example (v. 17-19)***

***II. As We Follow Christ (v. 20-21)***

***I. Follow My Example (v. 17-19)***

***“Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. 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 set their mind on earthly things.” (Philippians 3:17–19)***

A. In **verses 12-16**, the Apostle Paul laid down a challenge to us. A passion for God and His eternal purpose in saving us needs to direct our efforts and our lives. In our text for today, the Apostle applies all of this a second time by exhorting us to be imitators. Imitate together of Paul's pattern.

1. The principle of example ship is very strong in the New Testament. In **1 Corinthians 11:1** Paul wrote, ***“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.”*** Discipleship is caught as much as it is taught. Paul desired to be an example for others of how the Christian life should be lived.

2. He exhorted others to do this also. In an exhortation to the younger men and a summary to all he has said in **Titus 2:1-6**, Paul wrote in **verse 7-8**;

***“In all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, [healthy] speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.”***

The reason for the list of graces which need to be found in the leaders of God’s church in **1 Timothy 3** is because they must first and foremost be an example to God’s flock. Exampleship is an indispensable part of discipleship.

B. We must follow a good example because many false examples are out there and they are very dangerous. **(vs.18-19)**

***“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 set their mind on earthly things.”***

The **“for”** means this is the reason it is important to follow the right examples and not be found imitating the wrong examples.

1. Who are these people who are bad examples, and not the examples that we need to follow? They are probably those who make a profession of being a Christian and yet do not actually enjoy salvation. Paul cannot think of these folks in an unemotional way. These are people who bring tears to the Apostle’s eyes.

2. Paul mourns for those who claim to be saved, but whose lifestyle denies their conversion and leads others from Christ. His words are strong. They are enemies of the cross. They are people dominated by their physical appetites. Their end is destruction. Their focus in life is not Christ and knowing Him. Their whole lives are aimed at worldly things.

3. Our example is vitally important. We are to look around and find good examples in our church to follow. We are to work on being a good example to others.

## ***II. As We Follow Christ (v. 20-21)***

***“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”*** (Philippians 3:20–21)

A. Frequently we hear how actors prepare. I understand they sometimes say before acting in a scene, **“What is my motivation?”** The Apostle Paul states our motivation for seeking to be good examples of what it is to be a Christian. First, we must live this way because we are citizens of heaven first and foremost. ***“For our citizenship is in heaven,”*** (v.20)

1. The Greek word here is the word a citizen of a state. Paul was a Roman citizen. This citizenship provided Paul with privileges, protection, and responsibilities. We have privileges, protection, and responsibilities because we are US citizens.

2. Our ultimate loyalty and citizenship needs to be as a Child of God and we need to live our lives reflecting that high calling.

B. Our second motivation is that we have a coming King. Someday our Lord Jesus is returning. When He comes everything, including us, will be changed. (vs.20-21)

***“From which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”***

Perhaps the single most effective commentary on this verse is the passage in **1 Corinthians 15:50-58.**

***“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ ‘O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?’ The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”***

C. If we will not be an example, who will teach others how to be a growing Christian? Who will teach our children what a solid Christ honoring marriage looks like? Who will show others what a life aimed at laying hold of that for which Christ has laid hold of us, looks like if we do not do it?

I know what you are thinking. This is great but I have already failed. We start where we are and aim our lives at this goal now. You are not home yet so Christ wants to use you.

**May all, who come behind us, find us faithful.**

**May the fire of our devotion light their way.**

**May the footsteps that we leave**

**Teach them to believe.**

**And the life we live inspire them to obey.**

**May all who come behind us find us faithful.**