

SERMON NOTES

By Pastor John Paul Miller

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians

Philippians 3:17-4:1 – “Standing Fast”

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Philippians 3:17-21, *“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.”*

How strange that a letter so filled with joy Paul now mentions that he is weeping (vs. 18)

Why?

- Not because he’s in a difficult situation.

He’s a man with a single mind

Philippians 1: 21, *“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”*

- Not because of what others are doing to him

He’s a man with a submissive mind

Philippians 2:3, *“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”*

- No Paul’s tears are not for himself

They are shed because Paul has a spiritual mind and he is heart-broken over the way some professed Christians are living (vs. 19)

“...whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.”

In chapter 3, Paul exhorts us to have the spiritual mind and in chapter 4, to stand fast in the Lord (4:1)

The word “Spiritual” has suffered as much abuse as the word “Fellowship”. Too many people think that a Spiritual Christian is mystical, dreamy, impractical, and distant.

This is not true. The spiritual minded believer thinks more clearly than anyone else.

Warren W. Wiersbe – “To be spiritually minded simply means to look at earth from heavens point of view.”

It’s having a mind that’s been renewed and transformed by the word of God.

There are three main points that follow the text:

I. He exhorts us to follow his example (vs. 17)

Philippians 3:17, *“Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.”*

Paul is speaking to the “*Brethren...*” (Believers)

You must be born again

You can’t get to heaven by imitation – its regeneration!

“...*followers...*” – is an imitator – we get our word “mimic”

Some say this is arrogant on Paul’s part.

How could Paul say such a thing?

Is this not pride on Paul’s part.

I think not, what Paul is saying, I believe, is out of humility and concern.

Paul’s desire was that they mimic him in three areas:

1. His Dissatisfaction (vs. 12) – He’s saying, “don’t think you have arrived!”
2. His Determination (vs. 13-14) – Forget the past and press on!
3. His Discipline (vs. 15-16) – Follow the same rule

Philippians 3:15-16, "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. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."

We need to think the same about spiritual maturity and the sanctified life (vs. 15).

We need to walk the same (vs. 16)

"...be followers together of me..." (vs. 17)

Paul knew he was following Christ. He knew what God had done in his life and he wanted the same for the believers in Philippi.

He also pointed to the example of others – "us" (vs. 17)

If you are a mature Christian you are needed in the church as an example to new believers – you are needed and important!

- Godly mentors
- Disciple

Every one of us should be pouring into someone else what we've learned.

"mark" (vs. 17) – calls for careful scrutiny. The English word 'scope, or microscope comes from this Greek word.

Lessons:

1. Are you following Paul's example?

What example?

Philippians 3:10-16, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. 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. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."

2. Are you being an example?

Every Christian ought to be able to say, "Follow my example".

If you can't then something is wrong!

Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12, "*Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*"

The word 'example' is transliterated as 'type' – Greek = 'typos'

It was used of the impression or the stamp made by an industrial die.

It is used by Thomas in John 20:25 where he refers to the nail prints in Christ's hands.

I heard the story about how street lights came to America. It was Benjamin Franklin who came up with the idea of having street lights but no one listened to him. So he erected a light in front of his home which caused many in town to walk by and check out the light. Every one, it seemed, loved the warmth and light it gave out. Suddenly street lights started popping up all around town. You and I are to be like street lights.

Our lives, like Paul's, should be a mold into which the lives of others can be poured and conformed.

Why is it so important to follow a good example?

Because some have followed bad examples!

II. Paul warns us about the enemy (vs. 18-19)

Philippians 3:18-19, "*(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 mind earthly things.)*"

"For..." (vs. 18) – the reason

If we are to have the Spiritual Mind we must not only follow the good examples, we must also avoid the bad examples.

"...many walk..." – false teachers (legalists, the Judiazers) walking in the midst of the churches.

Philippians 3:2, "*Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.*"

The critical question - is this warning still about the legalists? I believe it is. But it's possible, and good scholarship supports this, that it's referring to the Libertines.

Libertine - one devoid of any restraints, especially one who ignores or even spurns religious norms, accepted morals, and forms of behaviour sanctioned by the larger society.

It's a professing Christian who feels, because of the grace of God, it doesn't matter how they live.

Believers MUST test the spirits

1 John 4:1-6, "*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.*"

Don't be gullible — "*...I have told you often...*"

Paul's passionate pastoral concern (vs. 18) "*...even weeping...*"

"... they are the enemies of the cross of Christ..."

Why the cross?

All Christian theology, like tributaries, flows into one stream: the Cross of Christ.

If you are wrong about the cross you do not have Christianity!

The legalist is an enemy of the cross because they say that what Jesus did on the cross was not enough, you need more.

Galatians 6:14, *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.*

We sing: "*...Content to let the world go by to know no gain or loss,
My sinful self my only shame, my glory all the cross.*"

The cross is the place of redemption, reconciliation, and salvation.

It's key = God! Salvation is by grace through faith, not by works.

Ephesians 2:8-9, "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*"

Notice their end is "*destruction*" (vs. 19)

It's a loss of well-being, not of being (not annihilation)

It's HELL!

Three things about their character:

1. Their God - "*their belly*" (gluttons & drunkards) – the principle aim is the gratification of their own pleasures and the pampering of their own appetites.

It's mostly for what they could get out of it.

"Filthy lucre's sake" – the Word Faith Teachers!

2. "*...whose glory is in their shame*" - they gloried in the things they should have been ashamed of.

They gloried in immorality and sensual behavior.

3. Their Minds – "*earthly things*" – they were materialistic

Bernard of Clairvaux – "Theirs is an endless road, a hopeless maze, who seek good before they seek God."

Are you seeking goods before you seek God?

There is a danger in seeking goods before God.

This is the pattern of the world.

1. living for food and drink – to satisfy ones own appetites
2. immoral sexual behavior

3. Materialistic

III. His eager Expectation (vs. 20-21)

Philippians 3:20-21, "*For [But - an intended contrast] 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.*"

In contrast to the enemies of the cross of Christ who mind earthly things, Paul says, our citizenship is in heaven (vs. 20)

The residents of Philippi were citizens of Rome; as Christians we live in this world but our citizenship is in heaven.

We should live on earth as those whose home is in heaven.

a. Our names are on heaven's record

Revelation 20:15, "*And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*"

b. We should speak heaven's language

c. We should obey heaven's laws

d. We should be looking for heaven's Lord

Warren W. Wiersbe - "We look for the Saviour!" It is this anticipation of the coming of Christ that motivates the believer with the spiritual mind. There is tremendous energy in the present power of a future hope. Because Abraham looked for a city, he was content to live in a tent (Heb. 11:13-16). Because Moses looked for the rewards of heaven, was willing to forsake the treasures of earth (Heb. 11:24-26). Because of the "joy that was set before Him" (Heb. 12:2), Jesus was willing to endure the cross. The fact that Jesus Christ is returning is a powerful motive for dedicated living and devoted service today. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure".

Do you?

Paul mentions two things that will happen when Jesus comes:

1. "...change our vile body..." - We get new bodies (vs. 21)

Our bodies are "lowly" - bodies of humiliation.

1 Corinthians 15:53, "*For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*"

Our bodies will be changed!

How?

Like His.

What was His like?

A spiritual body, incorruptible, and immortal

It takes place at the Rapture!

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

1 Corinthians 15:51-58, "Behold, I shew 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 trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall 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 shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

It's a resurrection for the dead in Christ; a translation for the living in Christ.

John 14:1-3, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

We need to live with that expectation!

2. Jesus will subdue all things unto himself (vs. 21)

“Subdue” – to arrange in ranks

Jesus will put all things back in order.

We don't arrange things in their proper order. Our values are twisted so our vigor is wasted on useless activities, and our vision is clouded so that the return of Jesus Christ is no longer a motivating power in our lives.

Heaven is not just a future destination; it's to be a present motivation!

Philippians 4:1, "Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved."

Follow the good and godly example; flee from bad examples and live with an expectation of the coming again of Jesus Christ.

When you do that you are standing fast in the Lord!