

Phil Ch 3 Vs 17-21

Examples, or Enemies?

A frustrated young man was once heard to remark, “Two things I’ve had in life are ample—good advice and bad example.” And how many of us can testify to that same fact, we here so much idealism, things that would ideally work out great, or that we should do in given situation. and Yet the very individuals who give us that great advice do just the opposite of that themselves, they seem to have all the answers, but they never practically apply them to their own lives. It’s the do as I say, not as I do mentality, or approach to life that we so often see demonstrated before us. and Sadly I would say that there are many times that even we ourselves fall into that same category, someone may be in a certain situation or circumstance in life, and for what ever reason they approach us concerning their dilemma. and We have the right answers for *them* but we know that deep in our own hearts if the shoe were on the other foot and the situation was turned around so that we were the ones with that same dilemma, we wouldn’t handle it the way that we encourage the others to do. We wouldn’t turn the other cheek, we’d go eye for eye and tooth for tooth.

How overwhelmingly we lack in this world for good examples, those who are willing to lead lives of integrity, not claiming sinlessness but leading lives of blamelessness. Those who are willing to have their lives examined under the scrutiny of open interrogation by the public because they know in their hearts that as Paul writes in Titus 2:7-8 they have been obedient to the word of God, in “*all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.*” Peter put it like this, “*having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.*”

Why, because in reality you’re blameless, and in their hearts they know that, well this morning this is the concept that springboards us into our text. The convicting, heart probing notion of the examples that we are based upon the precursor in the example of Paul the apostle. Paul has been dealing with righteousness in this ch and what that means. and He’s thoroughly dismantled the concept of works righteousness, and made very clear that the only righteousness that is acceptable before God is that which is found in the person of Jesus Christ But he clarifies the misleading thought of practical perfection vs positional perfection, that though I’m positionally perfect in Christ, practically speaking I have a long ways to go. So even though we know that there is no such thing as “legal righteousness” that doesn’t dismiss our God given responsibility to lead our lives in such a way that they are demonstrated in good works so that as people see the way we lead our lives, our Father in heaven is glorified. That our light is “so shining” in such a way, and so we need by the power of the Holy Spirit to press toward that mark, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.

Having grabbed hold of the plow we're not to look back but rather we're do this one thing, forget that which is behind us and reach forward to those things which are ahead. Leaving the past in the past, be it good or bad, live in the present and reach toward the future, pressing toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God that's in Christ Jesus. and Those who are mature in their walks will do just that, they will trust God for forgiveness, and not allow their past to stagger their present or their future.

I'm not insinuating that we don't reap what we sow, but that as much as would depend upon us we're ready and waiting for God to give us that direction that we might move in it. and If we're not at that point where we're able to get over that hump of our past, maybe we've grown lax because of some great thing that we're resting on and need to repent, or we're beat down over past sin. If we're teachable, and able to be molded by the Holy Spirit, then He will mature us and bring us to that place where we're able to move on.

As he states in vs 16 wherever you're at in your walk, whatever understanding of the heart and mind of God that you've attained, be accountable and responsible to that. and Throughout this whole ch practically (and much of the previous aspect of the letter thus far) Paul has been laying out his own life for us to take note of. He talks about righteousness, shows us where he's found it, demonstrates the practicalities of his life and then says.

Vs17-21

In Vs 17 Paul says, hey regarding this life, follow *my* example. As opposed to the Judaizers who he's dealt with regarding legalism (and that may still be who he has in mind in vs19), but it may very well be those abusers of God's grace as well who live at the opposite extreme of legalism. Those who use the grace of God as a cloak for vice or so that they might practice sin while abusing God's grace. and Here Paul is saying don't follow those guys; follow me. Follow *my* example, concerning what? Concerning practical Christian living, what it means to follow after and walk with God, what it means to be righteous and what the demeanor of the heart of the believer needs to be, what should be our outlook or mindset. Paul says it should be just like mine and you would do well to follow my example and it's not that he's being egotistical, but rather we have here a man who is realistic and confident in who Christ is and the work that He's done and is doing in his heart and life.

If time would allow we would go through the scriptures and just examine the qualities of Paul's life and the example that he's laid before us but even in this book we've seen the singleness of his mind and heart. He was consumed with one ever pressing reality, Vs21 of ch 1 to live, Christ, to die, gain. He was a man with a submissive mind and a disposition of humility and we seen that demonstrated in ch 2 as he exhorted us, "each one looking out, not for the things of himself, but for the things of others." and He gave us 4 illustrations of such character as found in the person Christ, himself, Timothy, and Epaphroditus.

Ch 3 show us that he's a man with a spiritual mind and heart, counting the things of this world as loss that he might know Christ more intimately, forgetting past issues and looking forward to the future, keeping his eyes on the prize of that upward call of God in Christ knowing that his citizenship is in heaven. and Ch 4 will demonstrate that he's a secure individual who knows in who he trusts, not being anxious but simply praying and making supplications in everything with thanksgiving and walking in the peace of God. You know just the example that we see in Paul the apostle in this book alone is enough to last most of us a lifetime, or so it would seem.

So again it's not arrogance that makes this comment, it's confidence, confidence in the person of Christ in his life. and He says "note" those who so walk, seek out intently and mark those who walk in like manner, who's lives mimic that of the apostle's which is in reality to mimic Christ because that's who Paul was following. Follow after them maintaining the apostles lives as a pattern not to deviate from, that's what we're seeing here, so follow after those who walk in like manner but don't deviate from those Christ like qualities that we see in the apostle's as a pattern for Christian living. Paul says follow me, how mind blowing is that? To be able to say that, and he said it often, 1 Cor 4:16 "*I urge you, imitate me.*" and Again in ch 11 "*Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.*" When we get to ch 4 of this letter we'll read in vs 9 where he says, "*The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.*" In 1 Thess 1:6 we read where he says, "*And you became followers of us and of the Lord.*" 2 Thess 3:7 "*For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you.*" Pointing out again the pattern of his own life, declaring how we could look to him as a good example of Christ like living. Jesus said, "Follow Me" and Paul would echo that as he followed Christ and sought to bring as many others along for the ride as he could.

As he followed Christ he could confidently say now you follow me and we'll wind up in the same place, at the feet of Jesus. Peter also made reference to his example to the flock as a shepherd and fellow elder in 1st Peter ch 5. and So we're to look to these guys, study what they said and did as we are right now, study how they lived their lives, and follow their example. and We're to note those who are doing that so that we might sort of hitch on to them so to speak. Ps 37:37 Says, "*Mark the blameless man, and observe the upright; For the future of that man is peace.*" Now we're also to mark those who aren't blameless, those who don't follow after the example we have in the Lord and His apostle's so as to *avoid* them (in contrast). Rom 16:17 "*Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.*" 2 Thess 3:14 "*And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed.*"

So we're to use discernment in whom we look to as examples and we're to walk after those who set the pattern of their lives after the pattern of godly individuals that we find in scripture, as Paul says, "*you have us for a pattern.*" Specifically speaking no doubt of those individuals that he's listed in ch 2 as well as the rest of the apostles, Christ Himself being the chief example or standard for how we're to lead our lives. So be one who studies God's word, who looks to these godly individuals in the word as a pattern and then note those who are leading their lives in like fashion and follow after them as they point to Christ. Now, (brothers and sisters) the question or challenge that lies in this principal for you and me, the conviction that we're confronted with today which brings us to certain decisions we need to make in our lives regarding the things of and in our lives, is are we such people.

Are you such a person that I can see you as an example to follow after concerning how you handle things, how you exercise godliness in your decision making process, or react to certain circumstances. Do I see that you're an individual of integrity, full of good works, always pressing towards practical perfection (not being deceived regarding your sin nature) but pressing toward the mark? But not trusting in those works to gain you favor before God or some sort of righteous standing in His sight but simply trusting in your love relationship with Jesus Christ for that having placed your trust and faith in Him.

Am I that guy for you, we need to be example's one for another, but too often we're like that one young guy who had in his life 2 things that were ample, good advice, but bad example. But if you're filled with the Spirit, if I'm born again, if Christ is living in us, there should be no reason why I couldn't say to you, hey, follow me because Christ is in me and if you follow me you'll see what practical godly living is all about. Isn't that convicting? and If it's not it should be, if you can't say, "follow me I'll be your pattern, because I'm serious about my relationship with Jesus Christ and I will serve as a pattern that you can follow after." Then you need to allow the Spirit to re-evaluate the priorities in your life, and you know what? So do I, God is looking for people who are willing to die to self so as to lead His people for His glory. He's got work to be done but He needs those who are willing to do it, Jesus couldn't have made it anymore emphatically clear than when He said truly, "the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few."

There are very few that are willing to count the cost, to be the example that people need in order that they might see Christ, too many times they see hypocrisy and they think "who needs that?" and They're right nobody needs that, what they need is to see genuine holiness in the lives of those who love God so that they realize hey, they've got something that I don't, I want that. I pray that God makes of this church a people who so walk as patterns for the world and other believers around us to see. Because they see plenty of the other and Paul realized that even in his own day, notice vs 18.

Vs18

You see Paul says people see plenty of hypocrisy; there are many who walk in carnality seeking to camouflage their sin under the umbrella of grace. and He's warning them again of such people and we spoke of this briefly, the bible is full of warnings and part of being an under shepherd to the Chief Shepherd Jesus Christ is to warn the sheep. Paul warned people all the time of heresies, or false teachers or carnal Christians. Jesus warned people all the time regarding self-righteousness, and religion about false prophets who seem real convincing on the surface but underneath it all is an underlying agenda and ulterior motives and the want to eat the sheep, or make merchandise of the people of God. They want to draw away disciples after themselves rather than pointing them to Jesus and we're to watch out for such people, we're to note those who are divisive and contentious and avoid them. and Unfortunately there are many people who fit those types of molds.

Paul says (read vs 18) weeping because they're deceived and deceiving others, leading them astray, he says they're enemies of the cross of Christ. Not of Christ Himself, these are people who claim Christianity, but they're enemies of the *cross* of Christ. Of the crucified life, of the life of self-denial, they seek to indulge themselves through the means of godliness, seeing godliness as a means of gain. The bible says with draw from such people, they're enemies of the cross of Christ, which is unfortunate because you don't make it to heaven apart from embracing the cross. Apart from dying to self, Jesus said, *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."* Which is to say if you don't deny yourself and take up your cross, you can't come after Him.

So though Paul may be speaking of Judaizers here, in regards to the fact that they seek to add the law to believing on Jesus (which alleviates the work of the cross) who stick to the Levitical dietary law (which would make their bellies their god) and who look to their circumcision as a sign of their being the people of God (which would put their glory in what they would need to be ashamed of). I'm not convinced that he's necessarily in regards to these guys because he's dealt with them already and even if he is in regards to legalists, these vs can be applied just as easily to those who abuse the grace of God to their own destruction. Who embrace the mentality that hey we've given our hearts to Christ we can never be lost again, God's grace covers us so we can do whatever. and So they're not legalist, they're liberals and they stand against the crucified life, indulging their flesh to their own destruction. Paul tells us 4 things about these types of people in Vs 19

Vs19

He tells us that their god is their belly, they glory, or boast in things that they need to be ashamed of, and their priorities lie in the things of this world, the result of these 3 ingredients being destruction, or eternal separation from God. Their god is their belly, meaning (in regards to the abusers of God's grace) that they follow after the appetites of their flesh rather than crucifying them as the scriptures exhort. and Yet the bible is very clear that those who are given over to the appetites and various unbridled drives of the flesh don't make it into Kingdom of God.

Gal 5:19-21 *“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”* Again 1 Cor 6:9-10 *“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.”*

You say wait a minute Jeff. Are you trying to tell me that there are people in the church who purport themselves as believers, who have genuinely given their hearts to Christ who have resorted to the likes of fornication, or adultery, who have given into the temptations of homosexuality and sodomy, thieves, drunkards, contentious individuals with selfish ambitions who place priority on the things of the flesh over the things of the Spirit? You bet I am, all of those things take place with in the “church” people whose god (making them idolaters) is their fleshly appetites, their belly. and Their glory is in their shame, meaning the things that they should be ashamed of.

Practicing sin and using the liberty they have as a cloak for vice, those things that should drive them to their knees in repentance, are the things that they brag about, they use God’s grace as license to sin. and Their priorities are in the things of this world; they set their minds on earthly things. Rom 8:5-7 tells us that, *“those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.”* We read in James 4:4, *“Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”* That’s why John tells us in 1 John 2 not to, *“love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world.”*

Now you put these 3 ingredients in the life of any believer, or anyone else for that matter and the end result will be destruction. It’s the Greek word “apoleia” and it speaks of perishing or damnable destruction, The Thayer’s Greek Lexicon defines it as, “the destruction, which consists of eternal misery in hell” Which could easily digress us into the doctrine of eternal security. Can a Christian lose their salvation? Well, not to get into semantics but I’m not sure that “lose” would be the right word so much as “leave” if you abide in Christ you’re covered by His blood. You leave the covering of Christ you’re on your own, which will result in destruction, turn quickly to Ezek 33 (read vs 12-20)

People say hey I did a lot of good things that's not fair, God is violating me, no, you're violating God, you're the one who's not being fair by turning from the Lord, if you walk in the righteousness of Christ, you will live eternally. You trust in your own righteousness or begin to practice and make a lifestyle out of iniquity, no longer having regard for the things of God, and the righteousness of Christ, then you will die, eternally, those aren't my words. How we need to be a people of repentance.

Vs20

As opposed to those in vs 18-19 *our* citizenship is in heaven. Now again in keeping with who he's writing to, he's writing to a roman colony in Philippi, meaning that even though they were hundreds of miles from Rome they still maintained Roman citizenship. and They were to conduct themselves accordingly and in that day Roman citizenship was a big deal. Now here's the picture, as the church we are to be a "colony" so to speak of heaven. and Even though we're not home, we still maintain heavenly citizenship and we're to conduct ourselves accordingly. 2nd Cor ch 5 tells us that we are ambassadors for Christ; we are to represent Him to the world, pleading with the world, or fallen brothers and sisters to be reconciled to God. and Though we live here on earth our citizenship or our homeland is in heaven, we're just pilgrims and sojourners and we're to keep our contact with the things of this world just as light as possible as we eagerly await the Savior, earnestly expecting His coming for us. This title Savior was one that was used often times for the Emperor of Rome, and so in keeping with the citizenship aspect of whom he's writing to he's saying your true citizenship isn't in Rome, and the Savior sure isn't Caesar. Your true citizenship is in heaven and your Savior, is the Lord Jesus Christ nor is there any other name given among men under heaven by which we must be saved.

Vs21

Notice the contrast, our lowly body, or vile body, meaning body of humiliation, we currently have a body that's subject to decay and the break down of sin. But, *"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."* One day I'll shed this mortal shell, and be conformed, or fashioned in a body like that of the resurrected Christ, prepared for eternity, prepared to inhabit heaven in worship and praise and adoration of Jesus Christ to the glory of the Father. and He'll work that miracle by the same power which He is able to subdue, bringing under His restraint and control all things to Himself, putting all things under His feet.

This morning if you're not submitted to Jesus Christ If you're not ready to meet the Lord should your soul be required of you, even in light of our nation's tragedy we see how quickly we can be called into eternity. and It's absolutely critical that we all be prepared to stand before God and give an account of our lives. If you stand there having lived a life practicing sin, you'll be eternally separated from Him. If you stand robed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ You'll hear come you blessed of My Father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. But the choice is up to you, you can harden your heart and resist Him or you can open up your heart and receive Jesus Christ I encourage the later.