
THE DANGER OF LIVING FOR THE FLESH

Philippians 3:17-21

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((DEACON))

NAS Phi 3:17 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:

1. What is antinomianism?

From two Greek words: "Anti" -- against " and "Nomos" -- law

This was a group that was "against the law." They were sensual, they didn't follow any moral standards but their own. They did what they felt like doing, what fed their lusts.

2. The Judaizers were a group of early Christians who believed that the Gentile converts needed to follow the Jewish law and customs (esp. circumcision) to be saved.

3. The antinomians professed to be Christians, but were probably not members of the church.

In v. 18 Paul says "For many walk . . ." He uses the term "walk," commonly used of Christians. The fact that he chose this word indicates this group of false teachers claimed to know Christ, a dangerous group indeed.

Legalism and Antinomianism undergird all forms of false teachings and heresy.

From this passage we learn three ways to avoid the false teaching of antinomianism.

I. Follow the Example of Godly Leaders (v. 17).

NAS Phi 3:17 Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.

A. Paul

1. He was telling them to model their lives after him.

In preparing them for his warning against antinomianism, he tells them to use himself as a role model. He was accustomed to denying his fleshly desires and one way for them to be motivated and encouraged to do the same is to follow his example

cf. **1 Cor. 9:27** (NASB) *But I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.*

2. He was not being sinfully proud.

Paul says, *“Follow me! Do as I do! Live like I live!”* How could he say such a thing? Well in 1 Corinthians 11:1 Paul says, *“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”* In other words

Paul is saying, *“Follow my example only insofar as I am following Jesus Christ.”*

Paul certainly wasn't above sinful pride. In fact, God gave him a thorn in the flesh in order to keep him humble after he received several heavenly visions

2 Cor. 12:7 And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me--to keep me from exalting myself!

a. Paul had already reminded them that Christ was the chief example.

INPUT: Where had he already done this?

(**Phil. 2:5-11** is one of the most (if not the most) Christ glorifying passages in all of Scripture.)

Paul's meaning here is just like his meaning in **1 Cor. 11:1**: NAS "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ."

b. He had just finished telling them he had not arrived spiritually.

Having just been perfectly transparent with them, they knew he was speaking as a humble spiritual leader. Another reason we know Paul was not being

sinfully proud here is because Paul told them to also follow . . .

B. Others

NAS Phi 3:17b "and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us."

If Paul were being proud, he would have wanted all the attention focused on himself. Not so Paul. He directed their attention to other good examples, too. He probably had in mind at least the two individuals he had already mentioned in this epistle: Timothy (Phil. 2:19-24) and Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25-30).

Paul was at a point in his Christian life where he could say to the Philippian believers: "Follow my example. Imitate me." Could you make that kind of statement?

- **Husbands**, we are the more accountable to be setting the pace in the home. Are you leading your wife and family in studying your Stewardship Devotional guide every day?

- **Children** (they truly do "imitate" their parents, don't they? Sometimes a parent can say, "Now where did Johnny ever learn to talk like that . . ." and all of a sudden realize Johnny has seen it in mom or dad.)

- **Fellow church members**: What kind of church would Grey be if everyone in it imitated you?

What would our attendance be like at all the services if everyone attended as faithfully as you?

What would our giving be like if everyone gave like you?

Are you in the position where you could with Paul say, "Follow my example"?

The second way to avoid this false teaching is to . . .

II. Beware of the False Teaching of Antinomianism (vv. 18-19).

A. The urgency of Paul's warning

1. Repeated warnings

NAS **Phi 3:18** "*For many walk, of whom I often told you...*"

Paul had warned the Philippians often about this group. The nature of the falsehood was such that the warning bore repeating again and again.

2. Heartfelt concern

"and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ"

Paul was deeply concerned for the welfare of the Philippian believers that even as he penned this letter and thought of the grave danger and

potential consequences to his dear friends in Philippi, he began to weep.

We must have a burning, heartfelt concern for the purity of the gospel message and fidelity to the Word of God.

B. The nature of the false teaching

1. Enemies of the cross of Christ

*NAS **Phi 3:18** For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ,*

Paul wanted them to know for certain that these were not merely believers with different convictions, but **ENEMIES OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST!** Paul does not mince words when the true gospel message is at stake.

Why would someone be opposed to the cross? Because it cuts across the grain of all that we value here on earth. The cross lays to waste all of our achievements, merits and pride. The cross reveals to us the depths of our depravity. The cross proclaims: This is how far God had to go in order to save you. The cross stands for sacrifice, suffering and rejection. Jesus said in Mark 8:31 "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected." (Mark 8:31) The servant is not above the master, and so we too as Christians

must bear the cross. We, too, must know suffering and rejection.

"The friends of the cross are those who show in their lives that they have caught the spirit of the cross, namely, that of **self-denial** . . . (and) the enemies of the cross are those who manifest the very opposite attitude, namely, that of **self-indulgence**" (Hendrickson, *Philippians*, p. 180).

Note the word "many". This group was a large one and influential upon this church.

2. Whose end is destruction

"This is their appointed destiny, for God has ordained that 'their end shall be according to their works' (**2 Cor. 11:15**)."

These (and all other) false teachers face eternal destruction. NOTE: This is not annihilation, where they simply cease to exist. That could not be an eternal punishment for they would not be punished for eternity.

Rev. 20:10 and 15 state "*And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*"

3. Whose god is their appetite

KJV -- "Whose god is their belly."

The second part of Paul's evaluation is this: *"their god is their stomach."* What a lousy god! Anybody want to worship their stomach today? But Paul is not just talking about food here. He is talking about all the harmful desires of our sinful nature. These enemies of the cross follow their own desires rather than serve God.

These antinomians did not restrain themselves. They did what they pleased and led feeling-oriented, pleasure-driven lives.

INPUT: What are some Scriptures that teach us to keep our bodies under control for God's glory?

(NASB) Matthew 5:28 but I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Romans 6:11-14 *Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not be master over you,*

for you are not under law, but under grace.

Romans 13:14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

4. Whose glory is their shame

And finally, Paul says, "Their glory is in their shame." In other words, they boast about their sin. They laugh about the things they should be ashamed of. There is no fear of God in their lives. Paul sums it all up at the end of verse 19: "Their mind is on earthly things."

5. Who set their minds on earthly things "earthly" = Epigeia (Eh-pi-gay-uh) Form: evpi,geia.

Col 3:2 – Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. It does matter what we think and we are responsible for our thoughts. Paul does not mean that we should never think the things upon the earth, but that these should not be our aim, our goal, our master. The Christian has to keep his feet upon the earth, but his head in the heavens. He must be heavenly-minded here on earth and so help to make earth like heaven.

INPUT: What are some ways Christians can be guilty of setting their minds on earthly things?

- More committed to earthly organizations (which may not be

inherently evil) more than the church – Materialistic: Placing excessive importance on wealth, possessions, and status symbols. Chasing over fleeting pleasures, overly concerned with earthly security, indulging in gossips, prioritizing earthly relationship over spiritual growth, Obsessing over physical appearance etc. Remember, it's essential to strike a balance between living in the present and keeping an eternal perspective.

III. Remember the Second Coming (vv. 20-21).

*NAS **Phi 3:20** For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; **Phi 3:21** 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.*

A. Our citizenship is in heaven

Citizenship comes from the Greek word “politeuma”, the word from which we get our word “politics.” But no matter what your political allegiances may be here on earth, Paul writes that if you are a Christian, your true citizenship is in heaven.

OUR citizenship, brothers, is not on this earth where rampant sensual desires are commonplace. OUR citizenship is in heaven!

Believers in Jesus Christ are to be different than the sensual antinomians of that day (and our day) because our citizenship is in heaven.

We read in Luke 10 how the disciples returned from their mission trip with joy and said: “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name!” Jesus replied, “*Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.*” (**Luke 10:17-20**)

B. Our anticipation ought to be eager

Are you looking forward to the coming of Jesus Christ?

Our waiting is . . .

1. In faith

Gal 5:5 For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness.

2. With patient endurance

Rom 8:25 But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

3. Unto salvation

That is, the final conclusion of salvation when He will complete it by coming for us.

Heb 9:28 so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation

without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

C. Our bodies will be transformed

KJV Phi 3:21 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.

1. Like His body

Our body is humble or lowly because it is subject to the curse of sin.

In that day we will no longer experience weakness, suffering, sickness, pain, or death.

CONCLUSION:

1. Are not these good reasons to walk like Paul?
2. Brethren, how are we walking in this life?
 - a. As "citizens of heaven"?
 - b. Or "enemies of the cross of Christ"?
3. The answer depends upon where we have set our MINDS:
 - a. If on EARTHLY things...we are "enemies of the cross of Christ"!
 - 1) We make our bellies to be our god
 - 2) We glory in that which is shameful
 - 3) Our end will be destruction
 - b. But if on HEAVENLY things...we are "citizens of heaven"!
 - 1) We eagerly await Christ's coming
 - 2) We eagerly await our transformation
4. Have you become...
 - a. A "citizen of heaven"? If not, why not become one today? - **Jn 3:5**
 - b. An "enemy of the cross"? If so, why not "defect" today? - **1 Pet. 4:1-3**

KJV **1Co 15:49** And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

2. By His power

"The question occurs, however 'But how will this be possible?' What about those martyrs who were devoured by lions? What about those who were burned alive?

1 Cor. 15:27 For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him.;

May God help us to avoid the sin of sensuality in our lives just as Paul admonished the Philippians in "Avoiding the Antinomian Danger (The danger of living for the flesh).