

5 N. July 2, 78 P.M. WRT

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ARE YOU A HARD MAN TO FOLLOW

Phil. 3:16-21

INTRODUCTION:

This is one of the first Christian books ever written. One of these letters that Paul sent to church, that had been established. And it happened when he received the call in the town of Troas with a dream that night of a vision. And he referred to it as the Macedonian call. "Come over and help us." He went. And the first town which he preached in was a city that had been designated as a miniature of Rome. It has been named after the father of Alexander the Great. It was called Philippi. The first convert was a business woman named Lydia. The small Christian fellowship met by the riverside to pray and later in her home. Many years ago, the church often met in someone's living room.

Paul was arrested as he disturbed the peace, and found himself in jail in Philippi. And thus having established the first Christian church, he moves on to city after city. And we know that he was arrested, and then finally was sent to jail at Rome. In the ancient world, without radio or T. V., or postal service, word had to be sent by letter. Paul locked up in an awful place. Heard news from the members of the church at Philippi. And immediately sent Epaphroditus to get on to them as quickly as possible, with some help.

But this man had become ill. He almost died. But Paul insisted that he carry the letter back home, and the people in the church should appreciate him.

We have this as a background. And Paul in this 3rd chapter has told us

ch 3



that he has learned how to count. <sup>V.7 - 28</sup> Everything is lost - that he might be found in Christ. That he might know him. And the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering.

We have also discovered that no one is perfect. <sup>V.13 - 11</sup> And Paul says brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended or to attained - but he says I have been reaching forth unto those things which are before me.

Paul knew about some people who thought they were really it. <sup>11</sup> They were little tin Gods. But Paul comes down hard upon this group, and says, yet my brothers --I do not consider myself to have arrived.

Paul was very much like Martin Niemoller, the famous German Lutheran pastor. Who was a U-Boat commander and later a preacher, and then defied Hitler to his face. He became a prisoner in the concentration camp. From that camp, he wrote a letter to a friend. In the old days, I used to be a bearer of the Gospel. Now that Gospel is bearing me. <sup>11</sup>

Now Paul in his letter to the Philippians, talked to these people that he had the same mind of Christ. He is in prison. And now Christ is bearing him up. He has not attained.

Let me pause here to say this - if ever a man had a right to be satisfied with his Christian achievement, that man was Paul.

And yet this was late in his life when he wrote - brethren I count not myself to have apprehended. V. 13.

Someone has translated this verse - I am still not all I should be. That he was saved, there can be no doubt. But he was dissatisfied - not with Christ, not with what Christ had done for him, but with himself. And what he had done for Christ.

In that 10th verse - we know he expresses that of sports - as an athlete. He wanted to know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings - as in V. 12. And I follow after - meaning I chase after, that I may lay hold that on which Christ has captured me for.

Many years ago, Spain stamped on her coins the pillars of Hercules. With the motto nothing more beyond.

But after Columbus sailed, and discovered a new world - they dropped a part of the motto. And it was made to read - more beyond. The greater the knowledge of the nation, the more it knew that there was more beyond.

This very definitely was a parable of Paul's experience. The more he learned about Christ, the more he knew about Christ, the more he discovered there was to learn about Christ.



The greatest perils of today is that we are so satisfied with our progress. And our Christian ideals. There is an evidence of the proper appreciation of the life and the person of Christ.

You need to begin your life with high aspirations and take Christ afresh and desire to be like Christ.

This is what Paul was learning - he was reaching forth unto those things which were before. V. 14 - it was to be Christ's likeness. And that is a blessed thought.

One look behind, sweet mercies path reviewing  
One goal ahead, one hope, one faith above  
Up then with pilgrim's staff  
Heaven's way pursuing.  
To reach the radiant home of endless love.

Now there are several things about this passage that we are talking about tonight. We are following a road. And Paul is giving us help on this road.

V. 15 - Getting the right point of view. He wants you to know that you must be perfect, and thus minded.

V. 16 - Keeping on the path. This one thing I do, Paul says. Paul will stick to the main road - he will go ahead. Only can we attain when we keep on the same path. A Christian never gets very far by always changing his directions. Have you ever noticed how wishy-washy some Christians are. I'll follow one path for about six months. And in about 30 days, they are on another.

V. 14



You give them about six more months and they are on another. They change faster than the weather.

*like Elephant Chaser in Grant Park - sat reading Paper Back Book - each page ripped  
the little pieces scattered all around bench - Page after page - Policeman, observed, Great fact  
sitting ground, tell why each page scattered - "To keep the elephant away" - how it was done  
Man said, "Yeah pretty effective isn't it!"*

This is mockery + Paul says there is only one thing - so far as we have, is to keep on the path. The translation is by the same rule, we miss the point. We are going to miss our way to the goal. What are we to do. Just go on - right on the same path.

So many people get knocked out of the path so easily. They get discouraged. And some of the little routine gets the best of them. They can't stand the monotony in the work. And the grinding out of the church services and the little details of Bible study. And the treadmill of spiritual exercises. The prayer meetings, the church attendance, the work of Christ, the ordinary hum-drum things. It is like three meals a day and going to bed every night. These things we take for granted. But you will die if you do not eat, if you do not walk, if you do not sleep. You will die without the common details in your physical daily living.

Let me remind you that in your spiritual life, you are going to die the same way spiritually. The lesson of our time is exactly this -- to keep at it. You know it is a pleasure to hear a boy whistling at his work. He loves it and he keeps at it. And thus he can put a new spirit in an old task. The same old church, the same preacher, the same congregation - and yet, there are victories that lie along that path by which we have come. We must keep on the right path. V. 15-16. We must keep up the practice and continue toward the goal.



Too much fidgetiness is not spiritual activity. We are not to be restless, spiritual hobo's. Always on the jump and never getting on. It is the steady tread in the right path, with the eye fixed on Christ - that tells the story of the final achievement.

17  
V. 17 - Keep the eye on the guide. Now Paul had urged that they keep step in the Christian walk. He carries that idea a little farther. "Brethren, be ye imitators together of me. Lightfoot says, that you are to vie with each other in imitating me.) That means, Paul is an imitator of Christ - now you imitate Paul. Jesus is no longer here visible in the flesh. And people need an objective standard - it is a secondary standard. We copy the copy of the original, in many cases.

Now the preacher cannot escape this side of his responsibility. If he wants too, or if he would. He must show the way by the way he walks, by the way he talks, and Paul made this his own living here. 2 Thess. 3:9. To make ourselves an example unto you. That you should imitate us. He did this for a purpose.

And Paul says, yourselves know how ye ought to imitate us. Paul begs the Corinthians to imitate him. I Cor. 4:16. The Pastor must lead and the people must follow. And Paul wishes here not for just a little following, but a company that will become imitators.

Now don't get it wrong - Paul is not a self-conceited person. Paul demands that they follow him. It is just like the captain who says follow me. Now most children learn at home in an unconscious way - and they imitate their parents. They will imitate their parents in the way they eat. They will imitate the parents in the



way they dress, in the way they walk. And this is an object lesson for the church that Paul is giving here - as the children copy the parents - the Christians copy the preacher. And mark them that so walk, Paul said, as following Christ.

Let me ask you a question - what if everyone in the world were like you in personality and in your attitude. How would you like to reproduce what has happened in your life, in your faith, in the lives of others. Do you have the feeling that you would like everything and everyone to discover what you have found. And you can say to the world - hey world, "this is living". Man, this is life. This is what it is meant for.

Now unless we believe that what happened in us, in relationship to Christ, ought to happen to everyone. Then it is possible that too little has really happened to us.

Paul goes real deep - keep on imitating me. That is the greatest test of a dynamic Christian experience. What we have found, we want everyone to experience. That we have found a great deal.

Acts 26:24 - Paul appeared before King Agrippa. His life was so winsome, and his message was so clear, that the King said - in this short time, you think you are about to make me a Christian.

I want you to notice here that this was a bold response. Paul made to him, whether a short time or a long time. My prayer to God is, that you and all

the rest of you who are listening to me, might become what I am.

There it is - confidence. Imitate me.

I wonder if you could say that at home, at work, with your friends. What about you.

Now this question here, gets ahold of you as a Christian. How can I with all of my imperfections, set myself up as an example? Why would you want anybody to imitate me with all of my hang-ups, and all of my failures, and all of my sins.

Note this - don't misunderstand Paul. Paul was very honest, with these Philippians. And he knew about his own failures. But he wanted them to imitate him in his experience of God's grace, and forgiveness.

How he handled his failures was an invaluable part of his witness to Christ, and his life. He did not want people to know how great he was - but how great that God had been in his life.

Many Christians never get on with sharing their faith because of all that they know is wrong in their own lives. They say, I am not worthy of it. And of course you are not. We are completely unuseable of our Lord. The only way to become an example is to depend upon him, and the joy and the love of his Spirit.



Jesus, upon washing the Disciples feet said, I've given you an example. That you also should do as I have done to you. The early church basically was called this. For to this, you have been called. Because Christ suffered, leaving you an example that you will follow in his steps. I Peter 2:21.

Christ is to be reproduced in us.

How about an experiment today. Let's live through today with our actions and our re-actions, in handling difficulties. Would you want others to live like that. Can we say to the people in our lives - keep on imitating me.

Does it frighten you at being an example of the Christian life for someone else to follow.

Would you like to reproduce somebody else in your attitudes, in your imperfections.

The question tonight is - are you a hard man to follow. And if you should be followed - where would you lead an individual too. Now those who knew Christ and those who knew Paul, knew that this was a statement like a teacher. Who puts a copy on the blackboard. And Paul just simply points out the pattern of his own life. You have us for a pattern.

He faces up to the fact that he is an example - and upon his shoulder is a responsibility. And while he does so modestly, and you if you take note - somebody



is watching you - somebody is imitating you. And there are always people who take up the same choices you take. And follow the same things that you follow.

18  
V. 18 - Paul pronounces here in strong language against counterfeit Christians. Those who would lead people astray. For many walk, for whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.

How strange in a letter such as this that Paul is found weeping. Perhaps he is weeping over himself. His own difficult situation. (No) he is a man of single mind. Perhaps he is weeping over his circumstances. Do not they discourage him. No. Is he weeping over the fact that Christians in Rome are not doing things for him. No. He has a very submissive mind - he would not permit these things to rob him of joy. These tears are not for himself at all. But Paul has a spiritual mind and he is heart-broken over the way some professed Christians are living.

19  
We read in V. 18-19 - that he gives us a description. And certainly he is writing about professed Christians. He is not writing about people outside the church. But he is describing those as enemies of the cross. Who added to the law of Moses. And these things, and tacked them on to grace. These men were not spiritually minded - they were earthly minded. They were given over to earthly rituals and earthly beliefs.

The word spiritual has suffered so much - as also the word fellowship. Too many people think that a spiritual Christian is a mystical dreamy impractical individual. When he prays - he is supposed to shift his voice and tone. When he goes to great lengths to inform God the things God already know. It is sad to be



spiritually minded. It means to look at earth from Heaven's viewpoint. To give your heart to Heavenly thoughts. Moody once said that "some Christians are so Heavenly minded that they were no earthly good." We have a dual relationship.

Like Lot, we look at the well watered plains of Jordan. While Moses refused the pleasures and the treasures of Egypt. For our citizenship is in Heaven.

For many walk - (evilly Paul means). One is reminded of Psalm 1. It is to walk hypocritically. Like a Heathen. Paul has in mind the Judiazers or either the dogs that he refers too in V. 2. This nominal church membership approach to things. At any rate, they had been warned of Paul of these classes. Of whom I told you often Paul had the duty of telling them. Either through letters, and he is weeping now as he repeats his warning. "These are a disgrace to the name of Christ in the noble church. And their disloyalty is breaking the preacher's heart."

It is very, very heartbreaking to see (members of the church) Christians to become disloyal and disenchanting. And become enemies of the cross of Christ actually. Whoever does not confess the witness of the cross - is certain an enemy.

Paul's whole life was governed by Heaven's laws. He concerned himself about others. About giving, not getting. About love, not hate. But sad today - like in Paul's day, there are those whose lives do not show it. They may have zeal in their religious activities. But there is no evidence of the control of the spirit of God. They are energized by the flesh. That they get all of the glory. It is bad enough that they are going astray. That they lead other people astray. And Paul wept over this.



The cross of Jesus is the theme of the Bible. It is the chief source of the praise in Heaven. And the cross is the proof of God's love for sinners. And God's hatred for sin. The cross condemns what the world values. In what sense were the Judiazers enemies of the cross. They ended up with the Old Testament religion. When the vail in the temple was torn down - they opened the way to Christ. It is finished. And Jesus had broken down the wall that stood between the Jews. And the Gentiles. And now these Judiazers were rebuilding the wall by carnal flesh. They were supposed to have crucified the flesh. And also, been crucified to the world. There was to be no glory in men. And Paul weeped because he knows the future of these men and he knows what will happen in the way of destruction.

Now I want us to take time to look just briefly at four or five things that Paul says about these counterfeit Christians. They are hard men to follow. And they are not the kind of example you'd want to follow. I want you to look and see how he puts it. Very clearly about these enemies. Four or five things he says about them.

First, the disguise they wear. We understand from Paul here - the fact that they are called enemies. They pose as the Gospel's friends. They say they are right in the church, and they are right in the midst of the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ, carrying on his work.

Paul says they practice as it is - as its foes. They are abusing of the doctrine of grace. They are infected with errors and infected with sin.

The first error is, they base all on materialism in the world. They include the human body. And some of them say that they have a philosophy that the body is



essentially evil. And they turn to gnosticism. If the body is incurably evil, why bother to subject it to any kind of moral discipline. And they twist their logic - and soon they are in fowl, low living.

The second error in their disguise is - the mishandling of what we call the doctrine of justification by faith. Bishop Mole said, "of pushing the truth of justification into isolation" And perverted it. Teaching that a believer is so accepted in Christ, that his personal actions are indifferent in the sight of God.

Isn't it tragic - they believe in Christ but they believe they can live like they want to live, and they set their own standards - not God. They disregarded his book. And what they were saying was - let us sin that grace may abound. And there are a lot of people today who believe that a bigger sinner has a greater amount of grace. Now Paul made it clear in this letter, and in the Romans, that this perversion of grace comes up in every age in the Christian church.

I am therefore, persuaded said John Fletcher - that as God did not set his love on me at first for anything in me. So that love which is not at all dependent upon anything in me, can never vary on account of my miscarriages for my reason. And he went on to say in his idea - it is supposed by adultery or murder, that God ever considers me as one of his own sons who has fulfilled all righteousness for me. There is no length then that I may run. No depth that I may fall. That would into - without displeasing him. I may murder like David. I may deny Christ with Peter. I may commit incest with the Corinthians. Without forfeiting the divine favor or the glory of the kingdom.



The thing that Paul was condemning was the libertines.

V.19  
Second, the doom they faced. Their end is destruction - V. 19. Their end - whose end, he says. Now this is not adding on extra words. These men were headed for utter destruction according to what Paul had to say. Let there be no doubt in any mind. It is a hard thing to get some church members to see that they are on the road to Hell. But the faithful Gospel minister will try to tell them that - but they just can't see it. But this is what Paul says here. Your end is destruction.

19A  
Third, the deity they serve. Paul says here - whose God is their belly. What they can eat. What they can put on. What contributions for their comfort and their convenience. Means more to them than anything else. These considerations determine their habits and their outlook on life. Esau said, I must have something to eat and sold his birthright. The golden calf is being cast today in different forms. As we point out the many gadgets which we have. These be thy Gods. Oh Israel. Ex. 32:4. Now this phrase here is not just courseness on the part of the Holy Spirit. But it is a reference to sensual appetite generally. And it means gluttony on food. But it means more than that. The fact is, that they are swept along blindly in a movement away from God. We have that today in science. We have transferred most all of our trust to scientific knowledge. Which comes through these senses.

Now this is a new idolatry. To make the senses and whatever gratifies them our chief delight. And our principle reliance.



19

Fourth, the disgrace they bear. Paul says, and whose glory is their shame. Man must boast in something - and if he does not know the Lord, all that in which he prides himself will one day prove his embarrassment.

Professor Erdman said, they pride themselves upon those indulgences which are really their disgrace.

Did you ever hear a person pride themselves on something and it was really a disgrace, in God's sight - but they were proud of it.

19c

Fifth, the disposition that they display. Who mind earthly things. Now this is not an anti-climax. And this may seem mild by comparison to whose end is tradition. But these sentences build up and they stress the greatest danger of all. Like carbonmonoxide gas. This frame of mind is lethal. It settles upon a man before he is aware of it. And he is drowsie and before he is aware of it - he drops off into the spiritual sleep of death. And Paul's expression here reminds us of what the Lord said to Peter - get thee behind thee Satan. Thou mindeth not the things of God, but the things of men. Matt. 16:23. Enemies of the cross, can never become citizens of the Heavenly kingdom.

With minds set on earthly things is the final summarization of the condemnation - the sham of these believers. They have their minds oriented earthward not Heavenward. Their lives are horizontal. All is soil -- no sky. They wear the Christian label - but they liable the Christian spirit.



And they are heathen. My how Paul's heart aches and grieves for these people.

Robert McCheyne was talking to a friend about a sermon he preached the Sunday before. My text was the wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God. But he added, his voice choking, I preached it with a breaking heart. Now Paul was like that. He was weeping here. He had a terrible theme that he was talking about. These people, bound for Hell, and yet here they were connected with the church at Philippi.

Now Paul moves on in the closing verses of this chapter - V. 20-21. And talks about the anticipation which he had in his own mind and heart. I think these are well worth a little bit of time because these are important verses and we really should not go by them without saying something about them. Remember now, he has talked about the moral ruin of these people - they were physically alive. God was their belly. They devoted their time perhaps to their stomach. And the last part that Paul is talking about - whose mind earthly things.

1, 20  
Let me ask you a question. What do modern people care most about? Face the facts. The statistics will tell you what things they think most about. On any Sunday in a modern city in a city such as ours. Where are the crowds? Let me tell you where they are. The churches are thinly attended. But on any pretty Sunday in this city, and in this area - you go to the ball parks. They are full. You go to the beaches - they do not lack crowds. People complain about high prices and inflation but they have plenty of money to travel, to dress, to spend on food.

And they are people who are not looking forward to what Paul is talking



20 ✓

First, the sure return.

V. 20. From whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul minds not earthly things but Heavenly things. His figure of speech that he employs here - Moffett catches it. We are a colony of Heaven. Philippi was a Roman colony. It's citizens enjoyed the status of Rome. Even though it was not close to Rome. We Christians, say Paul, are a spiritual colony. And our king is not Caesar, but Jesus Christ. And this mode of thinking needs to be renewed and re-emphasized in every generation. It must be gotten across that it takes more than just a nominal Christian. We are of the community of faith. And our love and our ultimate loyalty is to our Lord. As a citizen, in thinking about the independence of this country, we are loyal to our President, to our Congress, and to the God of this nation. And this is what Paul is talking about here. That he is looking forward to a day, as he goes home. He is looking forward to a day that he will settle. He is not a tramp in this world. Tramping about aimlessly. But he is a Christian, and he is anticipating, and awaiting the Saviour's return.

He is making all kind of preparation for it. The verb, translated, await - or look is a very strong one. It means with eagerness. Not with idleness with alertness and yearning - even so, come Lord Jesus.

21 ✓

Second, there is the splendid redemption

V. 21. Who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned unto his glorious body. How great an improvement is that - our vile body. Let us be clear on this. Paul, more than any other New Testament writer, held that the human body - though it was flesh, Paul taught it had marks of weakness. It was frail. It was locked in its limitations. It was pursued by pain and it was doomed to death. Paul knew this and he knew it well. But he knew that he might lose his life and he did. Very shortly after this. But this body of pain, of sickness, and of weariness - this body will one day be lifeless.



Will that be the end of it - never.

Beyond the scene of death, there arose in Paul's mind another scene. Christ would one day return. And at his return, Paul's deathless spirit would be clothed with a glorified body fashioned in power and duty like the resurrection body of his blessed Lord.

That was a happy day. Oh death, where is thy sting. Oh grave, where is thy victory. I Cor. 15:55.

The restoration of the present body, Paul had an inspired idea. That it was not going to be just the re-claiming of that. But it would be a transfigured body. And the word he uses here is changed. And the word like. They are more than just a passing interest because the change means literally to re-scheme. That is to re-design. The appearance of the body. The details of that appearance are withheld. How we would like to know what it is going to look like. But in the 15 chapter of I Cor. - Paul says it is going to be sown or buried. It is going to be decayed but raised. Without decay. And it is going to be sown in humility but it is going to be raised in splendor. Sown in weakness - raised in strength. Sown in physical body - raised a spiritual body.

The other word he used is like - like his glorious body. What the word implies, Professor Scott, says is - that our resurrection body in its outward appearance will correspond to its inner nature. It would be similar to the body of the exalted Christ. So the coming conformity to our blessed Lord's body, will be an appearance and become a reality.



Oh yes, cries Paul - our king redeemer is coming again. The night of waiting may be long - but dawn will break at last. And his coming will mean among many things, the redemption of our body. Rom. 8:23.

21<sup>c</sup>

Third, sufficient resource. Paul said, by the power which enabled him - Christ to subject all things unto himself. And (subdue) How are the dead going to be raised up. With what body do they come. How can the grip of death ever be completely broken in a world? How can the rule of evil be finally and forever broken?

Simply by (nailing him to a tree.) And this one king over-ruling all kings. The answer that Paul gives is simply (he is able.) Now this sounds like a trumpet note. The divine ability is brought forth by Paul according to the working of his power.

*Some return  
splendid Redemptor  
suppression of Power*

And when we grasp this message - we will see that first, in death, and resurrection of our Lord, that there are two events turned into one. His - he reveals himself and he releases his power. Nothing less than that.

"Beulah Land"  
Named Song  
"Beulah Land"  
Loud to sing -  
Told me I ought to die,  
Because I want to go  
to my Saviour!  
Written before page -  
2 stanzas - missing -  
2 stanzas - missing -  
the same as with

I've reached the land of corn and wine  
And all its riches freely mine,  
Here shines undimmed one blissful day,  
For all my night has passed away.  
O Beulah Land, sweet Beulah Land,  
As on Thy highest mount I stand,  
I look away across the sea  
Where mansions are prepared for me,  
And view the shining glory shore;  
My heaven, my home, forever more.

My Savior comes and walks with me,  
And sweet communion here have we;  
He gently leads me by His hand,  
For this is Heaven's border land.  
O Beulah Land, sweet Beulah Land.

A sweet perfume upon the breeze  
Is borne from ever vernal trees,  
And flowers that never fading grow,  
Where streams of life forever flow -  
O Beulah Land, sweet Beulah Land.

The zephyrs seem to float to me,  
Sweet sounds of heaven's melody,  
As angels with the white-robed throng  
Join in the sweet redemption song -  
O Beulah Land, sweet Beulah Land.